This Old House

Great COLOR COMBOS for kitchens
p. 49

Amazing money-saving makeovers!

9 clever ideas design pros use at home

5 custom looks you can steal

...and a lovely fireplace face-lift (for just $87)

HOW-TO: Add crown to cabinets

PLUS

Quirky cottage-style home office

One DIYer's bungalow madness

FOUND! 15 barstools you'll love

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76 HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CONTRACTOR

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Amazing money-saving makeovers →

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PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM) JAN BALDWIN; ISABEL LINNAN; LISA ROMERein; ILLUSTRATION CATHERINE MEURISSE

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013

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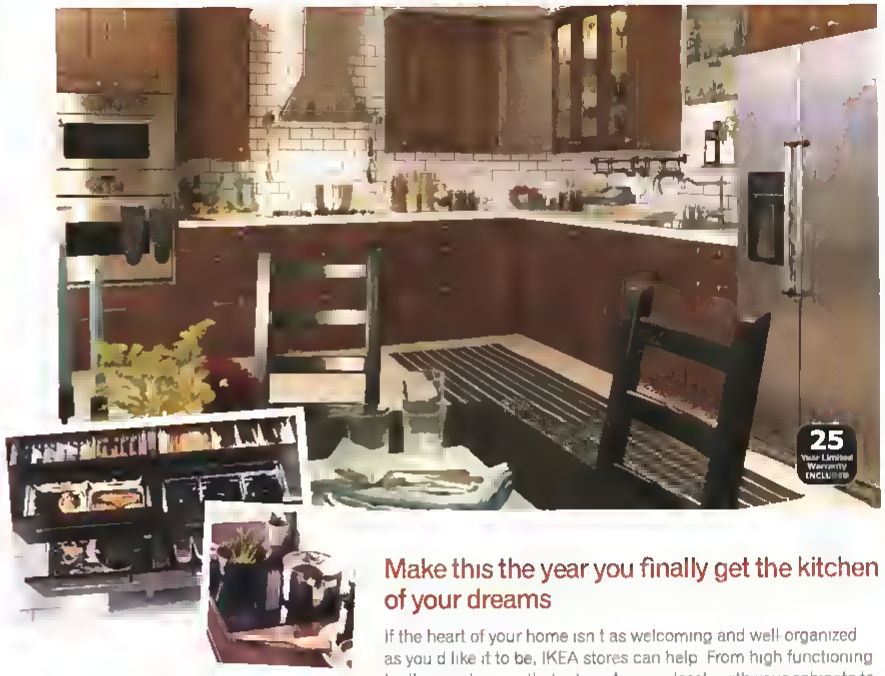

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PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): JOHNNY BOUCHER/BAPTENDERS; JIRIK GRUEN; LISA SHIN; WENDELL T. WEBBER; RYAN GEIV

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The editor hunkered down at home; floodwaters inundating an ambulance; the National Guard delivers supplies; a sailboat beached down the block in Hoboken

Wishing us all a safe haven

As I write this I'm thinking I've sort of told this story before. It was last year, about Hurricane Irene. But Irene's roundhouse punch missed my neighborhood and did its damage elsewhere. This time, Hurricane Sandy swung from back on its heels and connected hard on the chin.

My family and I have built a little life for ourselves right across from New York City, in a square-mile community of 50,000 people called Hoboken. Hoboken, New Jersey, is a rich patch of American soil: birthplace of baseball, the nation's first brewery, the zipper, Frank Sinatra, and dozens of other things that make life better. That includes the way its shoreline shoulders the Hudson River as it flows by, and, in fact, it's where *On the Waterfront* was filmed and where Marlon Brando, seeing it had all been taken from him, croaked, "I coulda been a contender."

But no one, contender or champion, could have ducked the punch that Sandy threw. That's true here in my community, true a hundred miles south, a hundred miles east, and true in some places where communities are now nothing more than broken boards and muck. Sandy was a heavyweight.

As you read this, a few weeks after the storm, it's possible a good measure of life will have returned to normal for some, though certainly not all, of those affected; maybe fresh foods and gasoline will be available, power and rail lines restored, FEMA and the National Guard gone. But I'm not so sure. Right now there is a 25-foot sailboat keeled over on its starboard side on the sidewalk just a few blocks from my house. The park my son once skinned his knees in has washed away, replaced by a rat's nest of debris and uprooted trees. Neighbors and their families in the south and west of town flooded to the third story in a bathtub of 500 million gallons of Hudson River water and raw sewage. And, as I write this, five days after Sandy's waves muscled over the river's bulkhead, with cold weather now biting at people who fled with only the clothes on their backs, there is no estimate for when most can expect the return of electricity and heat.

We somehow fared well at my house. We even kept power, though 90 percent of the town didn't. I know people who have it so much worse—here in my town, down at the Jersey Shore, where blocks of homes have disappeared beneath the sand, in Breezy Point in Queens, where more than a hundred houses burned to the ground. And people died—no one I know, but human beings with lives and families—that frightening night.

And so this thing has unnerved me, even scared me, beyond expectation. Sure, I've watched footage of the National Guard patrolling the storm-ravaged streets before, I've seen rescues, recoveries, feeding stations, shelters, and people with hollow eyes walking numb. But all that was on TV, not here, not at home.

During World War I, more than a million men in the American Expeditionary Forces embarked from the Hoboken docks for the trenches of Europe, chanting General Pershing's slogan, "Heaven, Hell or Hoboken." The idea was that as the doughboys left the soil of Europe, however they might depart it, they'd be either going to their final reward or returning here and then onward to home. They certainly couldn't have known, and my neighbors and I would never have guessed, that separated in time and struck by the balled fist of nature, those three very different places could be the same place.

Lying in bed the night after the storm, while I tried to find a way to fall asleep, my wife sensed my anxiousness. Like all of you who read *TOH*, I thought I had made a sanctuary for my family, this place, built on hope and sweat and not just a little money, that was meant to be always safe. That's the common goal, for we TOHers, isn't it? That's why we read this magazine and watch the TV shows and use the website—to help us make a home for our families. But as my wife turned to me, I told her I felt not just off-balance but helpless in the face of the power of the storm, as if I had failed us. I just want to have a place where you guys can be safe, I said to her. And my wife responded, where can you go that you're always safe?

I want there to be an answer to her question—a point on the map, a town name, a little somewhere with a solid fence and a sturdy foundation and a snug, sheltering roof. But I know the answer is "nowhere." You can be cautious, you can take care to be safe, but there is nowhere that you can always be safe.

And so you do what you can. You prepare, as I hope all of you have, for whatever dangers you might one day face. And you act your best in the aftermath. On the first night, with our electricity hanging on, we gave people the supplies we didn't need—batteries and matches and candles. The next morning we ran extension cords out the front door to a table where people could recharge cell phones and laptops. Others who kept power did the same and offered coffee and breakfast, too. And now, when I finish this note, I'll do what I imagine so many *TOH* readers would do in a similar situation: I'll go downtown and stand in line to volunteer. There are a lot of people in need, just as nervous, just as scared as I am. There always are, and because there are, the best that we can do is put out a hand. You never know when you'll need one in return.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: A resident gets a lift across a flooded street; volunteers deliver ready-to-eat meals and distribute water and food in stricken areas post-Sandy

PHOTOS, (THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT) CHARLES SYKES/AP; (TOP RIGHT) SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES; (BOTTOM) JOHN MINCHILLO/AP. (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP) M. CHAEL LEWIS; (MURIEL) MICHAEL BROCHSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES; (BOTTOM LEFT) CARA OWSLEY; (BOTTOM RIGHT) GETTY IMAGES NEWS

SCOTT OMELIANUK, EDITOR
ScottO@thisoldhouse.com

This Old House has a long history of supporting disaster relief and other charitable organizations. We include a list of organizations below whose contributions will help those affected by the Sandy crisis, but we encourage you to give to the charity of your choice whenever you are able.

AMERICAN RED CROSS SANDY DISASTER RELIEF
redcross.org/fp/sandy

AMERICARES
americares.org

DIRECT RELIEF INTERNATIONAL
directrelief.org

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
habitat.org

K.I.D.S. (KIDS IN DISTRESSED SITUATIONS)
kidsdonations.org

REBUILDING TOGETHER
rebuildingtogether.org

You can find a list of national charities at thisoldhouse.com/give, and a larger list of vetted organizations is available at charitynavigator.com.

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Upload photos of your whole-house yard, kitchen, bath, or other room makeover for a chance at $10,000 in cash prizes and a 2013 GMC Sierra pickup. Go to **thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH** for the entry form or to see all the reader entries.

TABLETS

Bonus images

See six more great spaces from the house featured on the cover—plus other tablet exclusives—only in the digital edition of *This Old House* magazine. To get your copy, go to **thisoldhouse.com/tablet**

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM RIGHT: LAURA MORSE; LISA ROMEREIN; NATHAN KIRKMAN

FEATURED VIDEO

Our favorite remodel of 2012

Think you have what it takes to nab a top prize in our Reader Remodel Contest? Check out the house and family that won last year's competition at **thisoldhouse.com/bonus**

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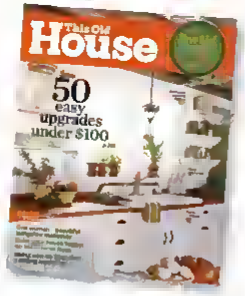

Our October 2012 cover kitchen, with its affordable farmhouse style, proved to be a big hit with readers. We tell you how to see more of it, and also share a tribute to a DIYer dad, a (not so uncommon) complaint from a husband, and a reader project with rustic shine

Budget kitchen redo

I *love* the farmhouse kitchen redo in October 2012 [cover and page 102] done by Macksi and Cody Warner. Are there more pictures available of the other side of the room? The original kitchen size looks similar to mine, with the dining room on the other side, and I would like to see the result of opening the two rooms.

—LINDSAY FREY, BY E-MAIL

The editors reply: *Lindsay, we love that kitchen too! The dining room side appeared in November/December 2012's Get This Look for Less, and you can find more photos of the remodel on the Warners' blog, mulberryhillfarm.weebly.com.*

Family inspiration

After reading editor Scott Omelianuk's October 2012 letter, "True DIY Grit" [page 9], I would like to offer him my heartfelt sympathy for the loss of his grandma, Olive. His letter really resonated with me. My husband and I moved to the country three years ago to get back a little of that DIY attitude. My inspiration and hero was my dad, who passed away last December. Not a day goes by without noticing something that he taught me to do or built for me, like the four beautiful raised garden beds that I grew way too many tomatoes in this summer.

I wish everyone had an Olive in their life.

—CHRISTY ADAMS, BY E-MAIL

Too much of a good thing

Does this fall under the category of a complaint? I subscribed to *This Old House* about a year ago. I really like the magazine and all the tips. Unfortunately, my wife has also become interested in reading it. Your magazine is quickly becoming a "honey-do" list for me! She actually looks forward to each issue and now wants to know when I am going to start her first project. Not good! Help! Please, either send Tommy, Roger, Norm, and Richard or back off with all the tips, tricks, and project ideas.

—RON OLSON, NEW BRIGHTON, MINN.

Correction

→ In "The TOH Top 100" (November/December 2012, page 81) the name of the manufacturer of the Pop-up ClogFree Drain on page 84 should have been PF Waterworks, not PJ. Our apologies for the error.

reader project of the month

Perfect barn light

MARJEAN AND DON KRECH, MIDDLEBURG, PA.

March 2012's Salvage Style "Use a Barn Pulley to Make a Wall-Mount Light Fixture," inspired us. [Find it at thisoldhouse.com/bonus.] Three years after a kitchen remodel, we still had an empty hole waiting for a sconce. We live in a renovated barn, so when I saw your pulley light project, I knew that it was exactly what I was looking for! My husband made the backing with boards from a dismantled fence, used a pulley and bracket we already had, and found new cloth-covered wire online. Thank you so much for the inspiration.

how to reach us

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  - **eye problems including glaucoma and cataracts.** You should have regular eye exams while using ADVAIR.
  - **pneumonia.** People with COPD have a higher chance of getting pneumonia. ADVAIR may increase the chance of getting pneumonia. Call your doctor if you notice any of the following symptoms. Increase in mucus (sputum) production, change in mucus color, fever, chills, increased cough, increased breathing problems.
- **Common side effects of ADVAIR DISKUS 250/50 for COPD include:** thrush in the mouth and throat, throat irritation, hoarseness and voice changes, viral respiratory infections, headache, muscle and bone pain.

*Measured by a breathing test in people taking ADVAIR DISKUS 250/50, compared with people taking either fluticasone propionate 250 mcg or salmeterol 50 mcg. Your results may vary.
†It is not known how anti-inflammatories work in COPD.
‡Restrictions apply. See ADVAIRCOPD.com for eligibility rules.

Please see Brief Summary of Important Safety Information about ADVAIR DISKUS on adjacent page.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

To get your first full prescription free and to save on refills,† visit ADVAIRCOPD.com or call 1-877-200-4673.

GSK for you — If you don't have prescription coverage and can't afford your medicines, visit GSKforYou.com or call 1-866-GSK-FOR-U (1-866-475-3678)

GlaxoSmithKline

ADVAIR DISKUS®
(fluticasone propionate and salmeterol inhalation powder) BRIEF SUMMARY

This summary does not take the place of talking to your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment. See full Prescribing Information for complete product information.

What is the most important information I should know about ADVAIR DISKUS?

ADVAIR DISKUS can cause serious side effects, including:

1. **People with asthma who take long-acting beta$_2$-adrenergic agonist (LABA) medicines such as salmeterol (one of the medicines in ADVAIR DISKUS), have an increased risk of death from asthma problems.** It is not known whether fluticasone propionate (the other medicine in ADVAIR DISKUS) reduces the risk of death from asthma problems seen with salmeterol.
- **Call your healthcare provider if breathing problems worsen over time while using ADVAIR DISKUS.** You may need different treatment.
- **Get emergency medical care if:**
  - breathing problems worsen quickly and
  - you use your rescue inhaler medicine but it does not relieve your breathing problems
2. ADVAIR DISKUS should be used only if your healthcare provider decides that your asthma is not well controlled with a long-term asthma control medicine, such as inhaled corticosteroids.
3. When your asthma is well controlled, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking ADVAIR DISKUS. Your healthcare provider will decide if you can stop ADVAIR DISKUS without loss of asthma control. Your healthcare provider may prescribe a different asthma control medicine for you, such as an inhaled corticosteroid.
4. Children and adolescents who take LABA medicines may have an increased risk of being hospitalized for asthma problems.

What is ADVAIR DISKUS?

- ADVAIR DISKUS combines an inhaled corticosteroid medicine fluticasone propionate (the same medicine found in FLOVENT®) and a LABA medicine salmeterol (the same medicine found in SEREVENT®).
  - Inhaled corticosteroids help to decrease inflammation in the lungs. Inflammation in the lungs can lead to asthma symptoms.
  - LABA medicines are used in people with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). LABA medicines help the muscles around the airways in your lungs stay relaxed to prevent symptoms such as wheezing and shortness of breath. These symptoms can happen when the muscles around the airways tighten. This makes it hard to breathe. In severe cases, wheezing can stop your breathing and cause death if not treated right away.
- ADVAIR DISKUS is used for asthma and COPD as follows:

Asthma

ADVAIR DISKUS is used to control symptoms of asthma and to prevent symptoms such as wheezing in adults and children aged 4 years and older.

ADVAIR DISKUS contains salmeterol (the same medicine found in SEREVENT). LABA medicines, such as salmeterol, increase the risk of death from asthma problems.

ADVAIR DISKUS is not for adults and children with asthma who are well controlled with an asthma control medicine such as a low to medium dose of an inhaled corticosteroid medicine.

COPD

COPD is a chronic lung disease that includes chronic bronchitis, emphysema, or both. ADVAIR DISKUS 250/50 is used long term, 2 times each day, to help improve lung function for better breathing in adults with COPD. ADVAIR DISKUS 250/50 has been shown to decrease the number of flare ups and worsening of COPD symptoms (exacerbations).

Who should not use ADVAIR DISKUS?

Do not use ADVAIR DISKUS

- to treat sudden, severe symptoms of asthma or COPD
- if you have a severe allergy to milk proteins. Ask your doctor if you are not sure.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before using ADVAIR DISKUS?

Tell your healthcare provider about all of your health conditions, including if you:

- have heart problems
- have high blood pressure
- have seizures
- have thyroid problems
- have diabetes
- have liver problems
- have osteoporosis
- have an immune system problem
- are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. It is not known if ADVAIR DISKUS may harm your unborn baby.
- are breastfeeding. It is not known if ADVAIR DISKUS passes into your milk and if it can harm your baby.
- are allergic to any of the ingredients in ADVAIR DISKUS, any other medicines, or food products.
- are exposed to chickenpox or measles.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. ADVAIR DISKUS and certain other medicines may interact with each other. This may cause serious side effects. Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take ritonavir. The anti-HIV medicines NORVIR® (ritonavir capsules), Soft Gelatin NORVIR (ritonavir oral solution), and KALETRA® (lopinavir/ritonavir) Tablets contain ritonavir.

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist each time you get a new medicine.

How do I use ADVAIR DISKUS?

Do not use ADVAIR DISKUS unless your healthcare provider has taught you and you understand everything. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions.

- Children should use ADVAIR DISKUS with an adult's help, as instructed by the child's healthcare provider.
- Use ADVAIR DISKUS exactly as prescribed. **Do not use ADVAIR DISKUS more often than prescribed.** ADVAIR DISKUS comes in 3 strengths. Your healthcare provider has prescribed the one that is best for your condition.
- The usual dosage of ADVAIR DISKUS is 1 inhalation 2 times each day (morning and evening). The 2 doses should be about 12 hours apart. Rinse your mouth with water after using ADVAIR DISKUS.
- If you take more ADVAIR DISKUS than your doctor has prescribed, get medical help right away if you have any unusual symptoms, such as worsening shortness of breath, chest pain, increased heart rate, or shakiness.
- If you miss a dose of ADVAIR DISKUS, just skip that dose. Take your next dose at your usual time. Do not take 2 doses at one time.
- Do not use a spacer device with ADVAIR DISKUS.
- Do not breathe into ADVAIR DISKUS.
- **While you are using ADVAIR DISKUS 2 times each day, do not use other medicines that contain a LABA for any reason.** Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist if any of your other medicines are LABA medicines.
- Do not stop using ADVAIR DISKUS or other asthma medicines unless told to do so by your healthcare provider, because your symptoms might get worse. Your healthcare provider will change your medicines as needed.
- ADVAIR DISKUS does not relieve sudden symptoms. Always have a rescue inhaler medicine with you to treat sudden symptoms. If you do not have an inhaled short-acting bronchodilator, call your healthcare provider to have one prescribed for you.

Call your healthcare provider or get medical care right away if:

- your breathing problems worsen with ADVAIR DISKUS
- you need to use your rescue inhaler medicine more often than usual
- your rescue inhaler medicine does not work as well for you at relieving symptoms
- you need to use 4 or more inhalations of your rescue inhaler medicine for 2 or more days in a row
- you use 1 whole canister of your rescue inhaler medicine in 8 weeks' time
- your peak flow meter results decrease. Your healthcare provider will tell you the numbers that are right for you
- you have asthma and your symptoms do not improve after using ADVAIR DISKUS regularly for 1 week.

What are the possible side effects with ADVAIR DISKUS?

- **ADVAIR DISKUS can cause serious side effects, including:**
- **See "What is the most important information I should know about ADVAIR DISKUS?"**
- **serious allergic reactions.** Call your healthcare provider or get emergency medical care if you get any of the following symptoms of a serious allergic reaction:
  - rash
  - hives
  - swelling of the face, mouth, and tongue
  - breathing problems
- **sudden breathing problems immediately after inhaling your medicine**
- **effects on heart:**
  - increased blood pressure
  - a fast and irregular heartbeat
  - chest pain
- **effects on nervous system:**
  - tremor
  - nervousness
- **reduced adrenal function (may result in loss of energy)**
- **changes in blood (sugar, potassium, certain types of white blood cells)**
- **weakened immune system and a higher chance of infections**
- **lower bone mineral density.** This may be a problem for people who already have a higher chance of low bone density (osteoporosis).
- **eye problems including glaucoma and cataracts.** You should have regular eye exams while using ADVAIR DISKUS.
- **slowed growth in children.** A child's growth should be checked often.
- **pneumonia.** People with COPD have a higher chance of getting pneumonia. ADVAIR DISKUS may increase the chance of getting pneumonia. Call your healthcare provider if you notice any of the following symptoms:
  - increase in mucus (sputum) production
  - change in mucus color
  - fever
  - chills
  - increased cough
  - increased breathing problems

Common side effects of ADVAIR DISKUS include:

Asthma:
- upper respiratory tract infection
- throat irritation
- hoarseness and voice changes
- thrush in the mouth and throat
- bronchitis
- cough
- headache
- nausea and vomiting

COPD:
- thrush in the mouth and throat
- throat irritation
- hoarseness and voice changes
- viral respiratory infections
- headache
- muscle and bone pain

In children with asthma, infections in the ear, nose, and throat are common.

Tell your healthcare provider about any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

These are not all the side effects with ADVAIR DISKUS. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for additional information about ADVAIR DISKUS. You can also contact the company that makes ADVAIR DISKUS (toll free) at 1-888-825-5249 or at www.advair.com.

GlaxoSmithKline
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
ADD 7MG January 2011

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AD5799R0 July 2012

EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME RIGHT NOW

Enter our contest!

Make it your first resolution of 2013, and put yourself in the running for a chance to win cash and a brand-new GMC Sierra pickup by entering our sixth annual Reader Remodel Contest. Even if you don't snag a prize, your entry may still be featured in our July 2013 issue. Our editors' tips for submitting a standout project:

1_ Take photos that are well lit, in focus, and free of clutter.

2_ Tell us the story of your remodel, including those funny, touching, and, yes, embarrassing anecdotes.

3_ Enter in multiple categories. We want to see all you've got, not just whole-house redos.

For more info and to enter, visit thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH.

☐ What's on your checklist?

"I'm going to install a few more lights in my attic before putting away the Christmas boxes, while we have room to move around."
—Vanessa Kleypas, Auburn, Ala.

E-mail us your ideas at checklist@thisoldhouse.com.

☑ Clear snow off trees and shrubs

White-blanketed greenery may be easy on the eyes, but you can't leave it looking this way after a heavy storm; too much buildup can cause branches to break. Prevent damage by brushing away snow with a broom, sweeping gently to avoid harming fine branch ends. If a branch starts to snap off, use a handsaw to remove it just beyond the outside edge of the branch collar—the bulge of bark from which the branch grows—as a clean cut will heal better than a ragged tear.

TOH TIP

☐ Stockpile fireplace ashes for your yard

Don't let this potassium- and calcium-rich by-product of cordwood fires go to waste. Let ashes cool, then scoop them up. Sprinkle on a compost pile for a nutrient boost, or save in a sealed container to add to tomato seedlings and other calcium-loving plants when you put them in the ground this spring.

☐ Prevent iced-over garage doors

Snow that gets wedged beneath a garage door can keep it from closing fully, causing a frigid draft or, worse, freezing the door shut. Road salt is corrosive, so opt for a noncaustic deicer (see page 20) and a square garden edger to push away snow and slush buildup. Spritz the bottom of the door with cooking-oil spray to keep the cold stuff from resticking.

☐ Take inventory of valuables

Update your homeowners' insurance records—and relive the joy of the holidays—by documenting gifts and pricey items. Save receipts and snap a photo of each possession, then write down its name, make, model number, and value. Store two copies of these records—one at home and one off-site, such as in a safe-deposit box. Better yet, scan and save digital copies on a file-storage site, like evernote.com.

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) ISTOCKPHOTO; KURT MANNEVAL/THE APRONS/GETTY IMAGES; ISTOCKPHOTO

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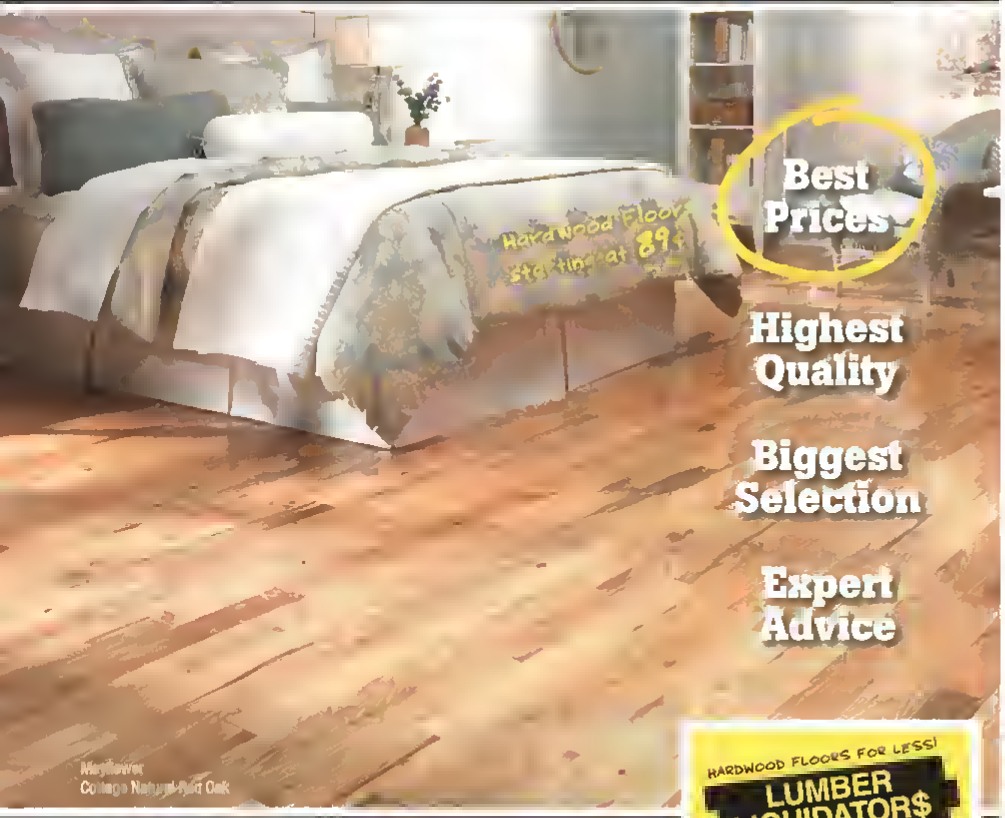

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home solutions

Edited by Amy Roberts

inside 10 USES DEEP-FREEZE FIXES MONEY-SAVERS MORE

Turn balusters into candlesticks

With their elaborate turnings and striking height, vintage wood balusters—long parted from the staircases they adorned—make for stately candleholders set up on a hearth. Just as elegant is how little the project can cost. We found our spindles at a salvage yard for $4 and $5 apiece. The shapely holders, evocative of classic candlesticks cast in bronze and iron, are also simple to make. With just a couple of quick cuts, a drilled-out hole, and a coat of polyurethane (which will also encapsulate any residual lead paint), the balusters are ready to mount on a base of stacked 4×4 and 6×6 post caps (a few bucks at home stores), stained to match. See thisoldhouse.com/bonus for the how-to.

Sash chain

This old-window upgrade can be rigged for a range of other home needs. Hang on to these ideas for when you have remnants on hand

1 Organize your workshop.
Fasten a length of chain to the wall and insert small S-hooks into the links. From these, hang items such as hand tools, door keys, and bungee cords

2 Decorate a lampshade.
Trim out a plain shade top and bottom with handsome steel links

3 Weigh down billowing curtains.
Slide lengths into the bottom hems of the panels to keep them from blowing around

↑ Tether a trash-can lid.
Link the top of the garbage can to a handle so that it never goes missing

↑ Suspend a kitchen herb planter.
Using C-shaped sash-chain hooks, attach four equal pieces to the handles of a colander. Line it with landscape fabric, hang from a ceiling hook, and plant your fave flavorings

6 Tilt a high mirror away from the wall.
Try this in a vaulted ceiling foyer or to give kids a better view in a bathroom. Fasten 6-inch pieces of chain to the frame's top corners. Slip the chain ends onto hooks anchored in studs; add a picture rail along the frame's lower edge to prop it in place

7 Get cables out of the way.
To avoid tangles behind the TV, open and flatten links, then mold with pliers to form arch-shaped brackets (below). Trep coaxial cable beneath the arches against the wall and secure with flat-head brads

8 Make new furniture look vintage.
Whip the surface with a chain or scratch it with a balled-up handful

9 Hang a frame.
Get creative with wall art. Screw the ends of a long chain to a frame's top corners, and suspend it by the resulting inverted V

↑ Build a boot scraper.
Screw rows of twisted chain to a board on wedges. Put it by the door for de-mucking muddy boots —A.R.

WHAT'S YOUR SOLUTION?
Your clever uses for an everyday idea could bring you glory in our upcoming reader-created issue. Visit thisoldhouse.com/tenus

EDITOR: MATTHEW CHAC CHIN TAME. ART DIGITAL STUDIO: Dan Grubb
PHOTO: John Gruen (2). STYLIST: Nora Reyes

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EPA est. 25 MPG Hwy [illegible] Ram V6 4x2. Actual results may vary. Ram Laramie V8 with EPA est. 20 MPG Hwy shown. See dealer for [illegible] limited warranty. Ram, Pentastar and Guts. Glory. Ram are registered trademarks of Chrysler Group LLC.
RAMTRUCKS.COM

Wood-veneer pendant light

A plain shade goes from humdrum to handsome when wrapped in lightweight wood grain. Veneer sheets, like the rotary-cut ash here, are sold at woodworker supply stores for finishing furniture (about $35 for a 2-by-8-foot piece). You'll also need a socket cord and an inexpensive 12-inch drum shade to fashion the fixture. With a utility knife or very sharp scissors, cut the sheet veneer to fit the shade's height and circumference, adding an extra inch to the latter for overlap. Use a handheld steamer or steam iron to soften the stiff wood before molding it to the cylindrical shade, then hot-glue and clamp in place. Finish it off with a contrasting trim of adhesive-backed veneer edging (we used walnut), assemble the fixture, and wire it up above a table or in a hallway. —A.R.

Nicer deicers

While common rock salt (sodium chloride) is the active ingredient in most low-priced ice melt, its use can be costly. It leaches into soil and waterways, corrodes concrete and metal, and poses a health risk to animals. To find a better choice, depending on where you need to use it, look past bold-print claims on deicer packaging and let the contents do the talking.

—CODY CALAMAIO

To safeguard gardens

Look for: Magnesium or calcium chloride and/or urea

Why: While all chlorides are salts, magnesium and calcium won't harm yards like sodium can. Urea is also in fertilizers—good for plants in small doses.

Product picks: Safe Step Mag Chloride 8300 earned Environmental Protection Agency recognition for ingredients that pose a low risk to the environment ($10, nasalt.com). WinterGreen is made of urea pellets coated in ice-melting calcium chloride ($34, ossian.com).

To protect pavement

Look for: Potassium acetate or corn and sugar beet extracts

Why: Potassium acetate won't corrode paving (though it may make bare areas slick if overapplied). Plant-based extracts act as corrosion inhibitors to deicing chlorides.

Product picks: Potassium acetate–based liquid IceClear ($29, montereylawngarden.com) and Bare Ground Solution ($15, bareground.com), with corn extract, can prevent ice or be used later to melt it.

To keep pets healthy

Look for: Propylene glycol

Why: An additive that absorbs water to melt ice, it's nontoxic if ingested and won't irritate skin. But use sparingly. In runoff, it can lower oxygen levels in waterways, potentially harming aquatic life.

Product picks: Safe Paw Ice Melter deices and curbs retreezing for up to three days ($25, safepaw.com). Safe T-Pet combines propylene glycol and urea for a pet-safe mix that's kinder to plants, too ($12, mortonsalt.com).

PHOTO: TINA RUPP. STYLING: HELEN QUINN FOR PAT BATES AND ASSOCIATES. ILLUSTRATIONS: JASON SCHNEIDER

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 98

Pay less for redo supplies

Here's how to save big on your next DIY project

We all want to keep more cash in our wallet especially when making big-ticket upgrades such as finishing the basement or installing new kitchen appliances So for tips on scoring bargains—beyond the usual coupon promo code and credit card deals—we canvassed insiders such as contractors designers and retailers as well as thrifty homeowners Keep reading for their penny wise ways to save on everything from drywall to dishwashers —CATHY GARRARD

Shop mom-and-pop

Independents typically have more control over discounts because chains often can t go lower than a set corporate sale price Ken Eilers co-owner of Borderland Hardware in Mercedes Texas says the best way to get a reduction on pricey power tools for example is to ask the person at the top such as the store manager or the owner "It shows that you re serious about purchasing something." In most cases it s reasonable to request 10 to 15 percent off says Eilers Just remember a successful negotiation starts with a respectful conversation

Get a package deal

For suites of kitchen appliances and bathroom fixtures consider doing all your shopping at one place rather than piecemeal from various retailers even if their prices are lower By bundling your purchases you instantly become a big fish says Allan Schuster sales manager at Gringer and Sons an appliance dealer in New York City "With a larger order we not only guarantee a lower price, we may also include free delivery or an extended service plan I ve even given away microwave ovens—whatever it takes to close a deal " he says

Hit the back room

We all know that scratch and-dent appliances are cheaper But the same goes for furniture including sofas and dining sets and rugs at many big box and independent stores—and there s a good chance the blemish won t be visible or that it can be easily repaired The products in our as is department mainly come from room displays so you can find just about anything in the store " says IKEA s Janice Simonsen. "Discounted furniture consistently comes in and out " Other stores may have an area dedicated to returns such as custom curtains that didn t meet a customer s expectations or new items that can t go back on the sales floor because they are missing their original packaging

Score new at reuse centers

More than repositories for used items these not for profit house part recycling centers also sell new items such as kitchen cabinets and bathroom sinks Here s how it works. Builders and designers donate job site surplus in exchange for a tax deduction Some showrooms even donate display models The centers then sell to the general public at a cut rate For the best selection check your calendar "People don t do a lot of renovations between mid November and the end of December so inventory piles up " says Steve Feldman founder of Green Demolitions a reuse center in Fairfield New Jersey From May to October when renos are in full swing there s a higher turnover That time of year it pays to visit frequently if you need something specific

Plan ahead and prepay

By mapping out a big DIY project from beginning to end you can save by buying all your materials at the outset If you re finishing the basement for example that might mean picking out paint before you ve hung drywall Planning and bulk buying are what give contractors the upper hand at the home center "You can go through the pro desk for the entire order and get as much as 20 percent off " says contractor Brian Siegrist owner of Siegrist Construction in Overland Park Kansas You don t even have to pick up all your materials at the time of purchase

Do some extra legwork

Even if you ve already decided where to buy supplies gain bargaining power by researching the going rates for the same stuff elsewhere before you commit. "When wa were renovating our kitchen I priced out cabinets at all the big stores then I talked to my builder who said he could make exactly what we wanted but out of higher quality materials and for less money says homeowner Bari Nan Rothchild of Park City Utah At a minimum you can typically get a price match

Buck the trends

The prices of finish materials—tile carpet, fabric or wallpaper—are subject to flavor of the-moment fads "I often see stacks of tiles that are beautiful but they re on sale for cheap because there s been a shift in color trends " says Mark Clement a Philadelphia contractor and host of the *MyFixItUpLife* radio show But if the tile is an earthy tone or the wallpaper has a simple pattern it will still be a solid choice " Neon brights and oversize prints on the other hand don t always stand the test of time and can look dated

Offer to do your own assembly

If you are willing to put in a little sweat equity you can often get a discount on items that are typically sold assembled such as outdoor furniture fountains grills and lawn equipment "If I have an assembled mower on the floor I may give you $20 off if you ll take one from a box in the back that I haven t put together yet " says Borderland Hardware s Ken Eilers

Act like a pro

Often all it takes for a DIYer to get 10 to 20 percent off supplies including lighting and draperies Is a simple request for a trade discount Typically reserved for contractors and designers with credentials such as a professional license or a resale tax ID number it s often extended to valued customers Or if you ve worked with a pro before ask if you can use his business information "I have clients with small painting projects that they want to do on their own and I tell them to use my name at the local paint store and the clerk will give them my discount " says Siegrist It s a goodwill gesture that doesn t cost me a thing "

Negotiate for leftovers

If a homeowner nearby is having work done ask if she d sell you any extra materials at a discount when the job is done This could save her the hassle of making returns or paying someone to dispose of the excess. For small jobs like retiling a kitchen backsplash that last box of white subways is likely all you need to spruce up your space Depending on the contract for the job it may be the pro, not the homeowner who owns the materials In this case, first ask the homeowner if it s okay to engage with her contractor so as not to be an interloper Once you get the green light, start baking cookies "If it s up to me, I might even give materials for free " says Siegrist "Later on it could come back as a benefit since they may call me for their next remodel project."

ILLUSTRATIONS HARRY MALT

Fresh Step
Odor Shield
Carbon Eliminates Urine & Feces
Cats everywhere are having a hard time smelling their litter boxes.
freshstep.com

From bare-bones to cottage-charming

After a little tinkering overhead, a plain white box becomes a seductive spot for cooking and entertaining. By DEBORAH BALDWIN + Photographs by TRIA GIOVAN

When a space feels uncomfortable, it's not always easy to pinpoint why. To Peggy Sousa, owner of a 1,500 square-foot shingled cottage in East Hampton, New York, it seemed odd that she didn't want to hang out in her kitchen. Everything worked, and a skylight provided plenty of light. But meal prep was no fun. "I just wanted something that was warmer and cozier," she says.

Enter architect Erica Broberg Smith, who quickly diagnosed the problem. "The ceiling was one long diagonal slope," she recalls. "It was too severe and too tall." So Broberg Smith kept the slope with the skylight but added a second one to create a false gable that peaks in the center of the room, yielding a sheltering effect. A soaring 16-foot range-hood duct highlights the room's new symmetry and injects a bit of drama, too. The relaxed setting, finished with vintage-look cabinets and a soft palette, is now Peggy's favorite place to entertain. "When you have a kitchen this beautiful, it motivates you to cook more," she says. "I've made some amazing meals here!"

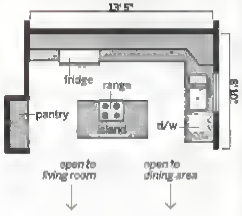
{ before }

before White laminate cabinets and countertops had a sterile look.
after Sunny painted cabinets and a warm wood island give the kitchen a more traditional feel.
Painted cabinets, Smith River Kitchens

The island, a piece that homeowner Peggy Sousa had in storage while awaiting her dream kitchen redo, reflects her love of antiques.

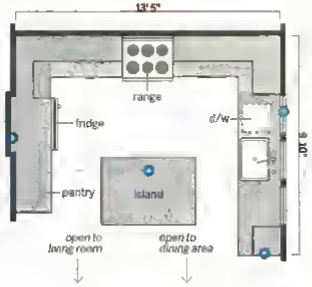
before

The 117-square-foot open kitchen lacked warmth



after

Adding a foot to the sink wall created more counter space. Centering the range on the back wall draws attention to the now symmetrical vaulted ceiling.



FLOOR PLANS: ALI WERNET

1 Rebuilt the wall without the old pantry bumpout but with a new one, to make the fridge flush

2 Replaced the two-tier island and its unventilated range with a furniture-style piece and moved the range to the back wall

3 Installed a trio of windows over the sink to give the kitchen a more welcoming look along with a better view and more natural light.

4 Extended the sink-wall cabinets and countertop 12 inches toward the dining area to create better proportions and a landing spot for platters and plates.

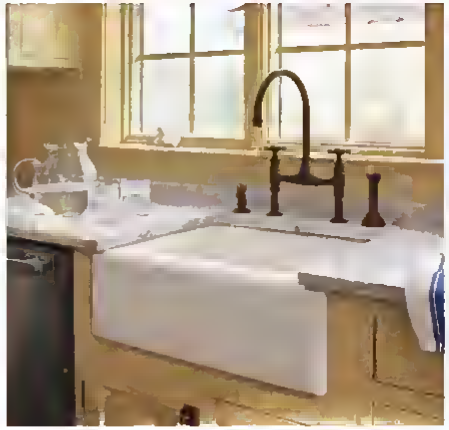
← **Wine cubbies** tap a sliver of space between the built-in microwave and the vintage-look glass-front cabinets

homeowner tip
PEGGY SOUSA
EAST HAMPTON, N.Y.

"Installing beadboard above a small backsplash of countertop material adds a warm look and saves on tile work."

← **The snug work triangle** locates fridge and pantry provisions within easy reach of prep space and the range. *Range: Wolf. Refrigerator: Sub-Zero.*

→ **Traditional finishes** include the marble work surface, beadboard backsplash, white apron sink, and bronze-finished bridge faucet. *Sink: Waterworks. Faucet: Rohl. Windows: Andersen.*



↑ **A custom spice rack** hangs on the inside of a cabinet door near the range; the shelves are recessed to create a perfect fit.

SHARE YOUR REMODEL
Enter your kitchen or bath redo in our Reader Remodel Contest for a chance to win a new pickup and cash. Post entries at thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 98

Your Old House

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This Old House 2013 Reader Remodel Contest: Only entries received from December 3, 2012, through March 18, 2013, are eligible to win. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, and Canada (with the exception of Quebec) who are 18 years or older at time of entry. Void where prohibited by law. Employees of This Old House, Time Inc., GMC Division, General Motors LLC and their promotional partners and their respective parents, affiliates and subsidiaries, participating advertising and promotion agencies (and members of their immediate family and/or those living in the same household of each such employee) are not eligible. For official contest rules and instructions about how to enter, go to thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH.

SPONSORED BY GMC

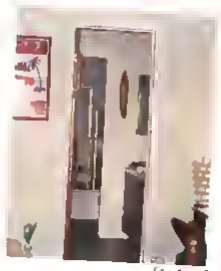
Adding light, no windows needed

A dark, narrow divided-in-two bath gets a brightness boost with a more open floor plan and soothing pale finishes By MEGAN BAKER + Photographs by MARK LOHMAN

The guest bath is often at the bottom of the homeowner's redo list. But not for Oceanside, California, residents Larry and Dona Burns, whose windowless guest washroom was weighed down by dark fixtures and a doorway segregating the shower and toilet from the vanity and linen closet. To keep their company more comfortable, the couple enlisted designer Beth Bynon, who carved the dividing-wall doorway into a dramatic arch framing a glass shower enclosure for an uninterrupted front-to-back sight line. She swapped the bulky vanity for a 1920s-style pedestal sink, and the dark floor tile for white hexes. She also eliminated the linen closet just inside the main doorway, allowing direct access to the guest-bedroom closet. A bathroom hutch houses towels and toiletries; wainscoting and crown molding complete the classic look.

"It used to be like a tomb in there," Larry says. "But now it's nice and open. It's the difference between night and day."

White hex tile gains definition from gray grout, which highlights its classic shape.

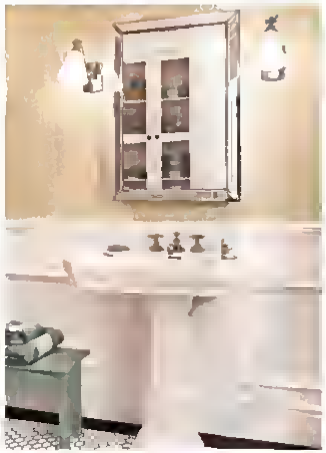


{ before }

before With no windows, the broken-up bath lacked light and air. **after** A wide archway that terminates into a sidewall opens up the space. A large mirrored medicine cabinet and white fixtures add to the bright, clean look. *Paint (walls) Ralph Lauren's Nigerian Peony*

the key details

A wide pedestal sink keeps the bath feeling airy while providing deck space for toiletries. The mirrored medicine cabinet reflects light from a pair of vintage-look sconces.
Sink, faucet, and medicine cabinet: For Town by Michael S. Smith. Sconces: Restoration Hardware



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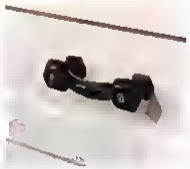
The built-in hutch features shelves for bathing essentials and four drawers for guests' belongings. Seeded glass doors lighten the look of the ceiling high cabinet

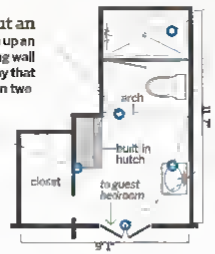
Onyx tile creates a graphic, clean lined border along the floor
Floor tile: EMS

Vintage glass pulls echo the black tile border on the floor



after

While the footprint stayed the same, a more open layout, built-in storage, an airy pedestal sink, and a frameless glass shower wall create a feeling of spaciousness



1 Carved out an arch to open up an existing dividing wall and doorway that cut the bath in two

2 Removed a linen closet to allow access to the guest bedroom closet via a pocket door, and added a built-in hutch for storage.

3 Replaced the tub/shower with a glass-enclosed tiled shower stall and swapped a bulky vanity for a sleek pedestal sink

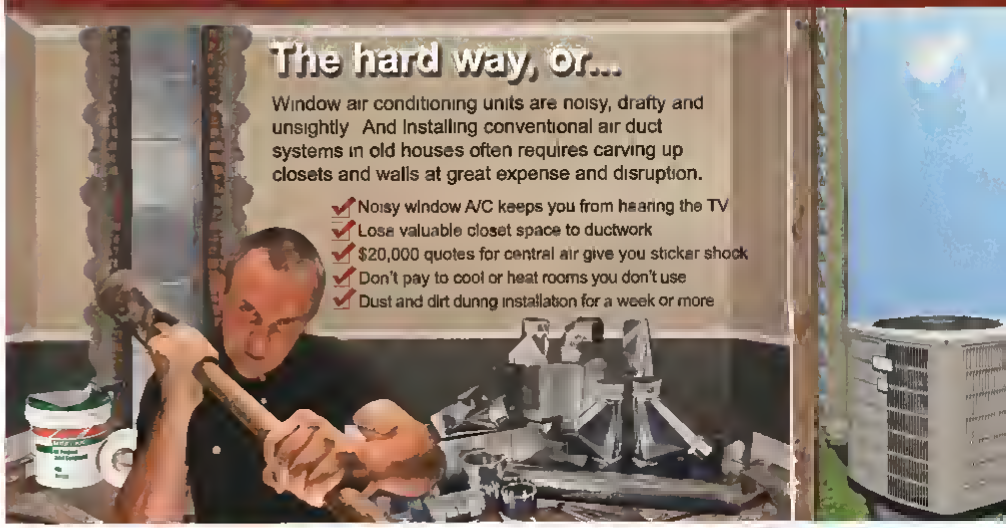
4 Widened the narrow doorway by 10 inches to accommodate double doors for a more gracious entry

pro advice
BETH BYNON, INTERIOR DESIGNER
OCEANSIDE, CALIFORNIA

"A curved arch helps draw the eye up, visually lifting the ceiling and making a small space feel bigger."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 98

Heating and Cooling Your Old House


The hard way, or...
Window air conditioning units are noisy, drafty and unsightly. And installing conventional air duct systems in old houses often requires carving up closets and walls at great expense and disruption.
Noisy window A/C keeps you from hearing the TV
Lose valuable closet space to ductwork
$20,000 quotes for central air give you sticker shock
Don't pay to cool or heat rooms you don't use
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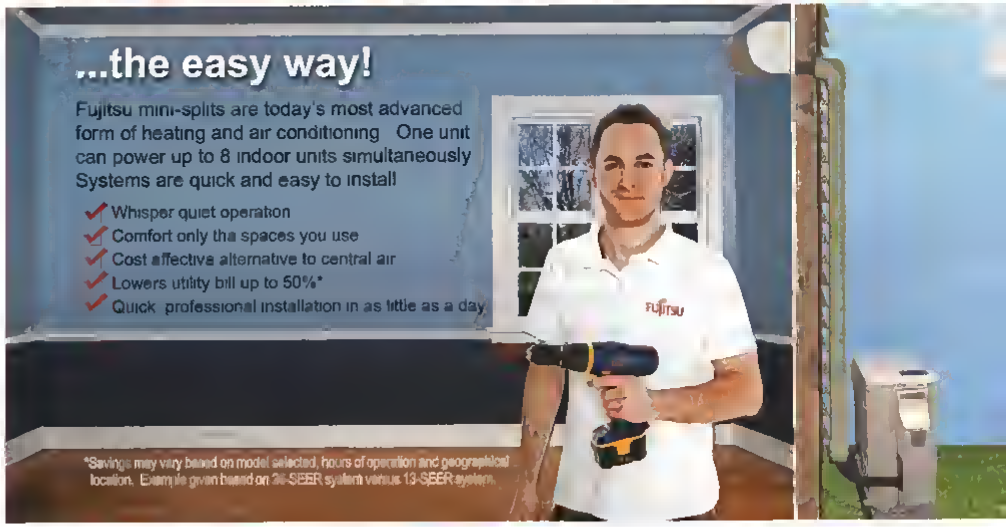
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Standout stools

These eye-catching and space-saving pub classics provide style and an easy on-and-off perch at a countertop eating area, a homework station, even your own basement bar By AMY ROBERTS Photographs by LISA SHIN

Used for centuries to pack in patrons at ye olde watering hole, backless stools are equally handy in a kitchen for keeping family close at the breakfast bar or as casual, convenient seating in any other room in the house. Where and how you use a stool is typically dictated by its height: 24 inches for enjoying a cup of coffee at a counter, 30 for pulling up to a raised bar, and 18 for paying bills at a sit-down desk. Some stools are adjustable with a telescoping seat that lets you crank 'em up or down depending on the height of the surface. From the myriad stools in the marketplace, we selected these 15 distinctive and versatile ones. In wood or metal, with bright paint or a classic shape (some have both!), you're sure to find a stool to fit your needs, personal style, and wallet.

colorful and curvy
HOME DECORATORS COLLECTION
Height: 24" (shown) or 30"
Made of: Painted birch and caning
Highlight: The bentwood frame is a riff on an 1850s Thonet café seat, in a fresh sky blue. $129; homedecorators.com

bistro chic
ZIN HOME
Height: 28" only
Made of: Painted iron
Highlight: Modeled after a mid-century French bistro stool, it has a weathered red finish. $195 zinhome.com

clean-lined swiveler
CRATE & BARREL
Height: 24" (shown) or 30"
Made of: Brushed aluminum
Highlight: The seat turns smoothly on ball bearings. $100; crateandbarrel.com

METAL

Patterned after stools used in art studios, factories, and restaurants, these shapely steel or iron seats are built to last.

petite pivoter
CAROLINA CHAIR AND TABLE
Height: 19½" to 27½"
Made of: Painted iron
Highlight: At its lowest height, this adjustable draftsman-style stool can double as a desk or dining chair. $89; overstock.com

soda-fountain favorite
ALSTON QUALITY INDUSTRIES
Height: 30" only
Made of: Chrome-plated steel and vinyl upholstery
Highlight: It's got a fun, vintage vibe and a [illegible] $90; [illegible]

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[illegible]
[illegible]
26" to 30"
Steel and mango wood
Highlight: It's a replica of a 1900s drafting stool with a rough-hewn seat. $149; baltarridesigns.com

[illegible]
18", 22", 7[illegible]
or 30"
[illegible]
Painted [illegible]
Styled after an artist's perch, this welded blue stool weighs just 12 pounds. $258 for two; wayfair.com

sculpted seat
WISTERIA
Height: 24" (shown) or 30"
Made of: Iron and unfinished oak
Highlight: A contoured seat and a footrest make this stool surprisingly comfy. $149; wisteria.com

sturdy design
WISTERIA
Height: 24½" to 30"
Made of: Iron
Highlight: The telescoping seat has a built-in pin that prevents it from rising too high and becoming unstable. $179, wisteria.com

[illegible]
[illegible]
FOR
[illegible]
topic in
reader-created issue. Post
suggestions

WOOD

Whether painted or stained, with sleek [illegible] lines or [illegible] turnings, [illegible] stools have a warm and laid-back

EXCLUSIVE TOH DISCOUNT! 15% OFF DETAILS AT THISOLDHOUSE.COM/DEALS

[illegible] stools 24 [illegible] provide elbow room. Stools with swiveling seats 26 to 30 inches for knee clearance.

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] or 30"
[illegible] wood tone
[illegible] work with a
[illegible] schemes
$60; [illegible]

country charmer
JCPENNEY
Height: 24" (shown) or 30"
Made of: Painted rubberwood and rush
Highlight: A woven seat adds a rustic touch and extra padding. $90; jcpenney.com

[illegible]
WEST ELM
Height: 26" or 30" (shown)
Made of: Painted solid and engineered wood
Highlight: A red finish and gentle curves take the edge off this modern stool. $99, westelm.com

jet-black twister
IKEA
25" to 29"
Painted birch
Highlight: Widely splayed legs provide firm footing for this height-adjustable stool. $40; ikea.com

[illegible]
30" only
[illegible]: Painted pine
[illegible]: The clear-finished [illegible] on this green ladder-sided stool swivels for easy access. $50; plowhearth.com

So can I keep my favorite frying pan?

Induction cooktops are fast, efficient, and safety-minded But making the leap to this technology requires more than an act of faith—so keep these five tips in mind By DEBORAH BALDWIN

GE PHP960 36-inch induction cooktop

Think of it as [illegible] of a smartphone. Once you've ta[illegible] on a high-powered induction unit [illegible] watched it fire up so fast that there's no time to chop an onion, who's going back to slow-poke electric or unruly gas? Using [illegible] coils to heat the pan, not the sur[illegible], [illegible] saves energy and precious [illegible] Since the burner stays cool, [illegible] in the kitchen and fewer burnt spills—and fingertips. With prices starting at about $1,000, induction cooktops are moving from cult to mass-market status. Still, they take getting used to. For one, you'll probably need new cookware. Read on to learn what to look at before you leap.

1

Check the wattage and your fuse box

The more watts, the more speed. Look for a super burner One that draws 3,700 watts can boil 6 quarts of water 5¼ minutes faster than a 17,000-Btu gas burner A super burner typically borrows power from another burner. Plan for a dedicated 240-volt circuit.

2

Assess your pots and pans

You'll need flat bottom cookware with enough iron to hold a magnet—some stainless steel qualifies. Make sure you have at least one burner that's as big as your biggest pan; induction works fine when the pan is smaller, but not the other way around

3

Fiddle with the c[illegible]

They should be intuitive, with a [illegible] as touch pads lack the [illegible] variability of k[illegible] lock feature is handy in case a child—or a [illegible] cat—inadvertently flicks on the power under a [illegible]

4

[illegible] over the surface

The shinier the glass, the more likely it is to show imperfections, so choose a patterned or textured finish. Glass can crack, read the warranty's fine print and wield heavy pots with care. You'll need a special nonabrasive cleaner and a dedicated scrubber to avoid scratches.

5

Read [illegible] instructions

If you already have a countertop cutout, make sure the new unit is a perfect fit, with sufficient space below to allow air to circulate (the magnets get hot). Cooktops designed to sit flush with the counter may need extra support. ■

SHARE YOUR REMODEL
Enter your kitchen or bath redo in our Reader Remodel Contest for a chance to win a new pickup and cash. Post entries at thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH

Very high triglycerides is a medical term for something serious:

TOO MUCH FAT IN YOUR BLOOD.

Ask your doctor about an FDA-approved medication made from omega-3 fish oil:
LOVAZA® (omega-3-acid ethyl esters)

If you have high cholesterol, diabetes or are overweight, you may also be at risk for very high triglycerides (≥500 mg/dL), which is a serious medical condition LOVAZA is an FDA-approved medication for treating very high triglycerides that's made from omega-3 fish oil. LOVAZA, along with diet, has been clinically proven to lower very high triglycerides in adults. Individual results may vary. It is not known if LOVAZA prevents you from having a heart attack or stroke. LOVAZA is only available by prescription. You can't get it at a health food store. So if you think you might have very high triglycerides, talk to your doctor about getting your triglyceride levels tested and ask about LOVAZA.

Capsule shown not actual size

LOVAZA is a prescription medicine used along with a low fat and low cholesterol diet to lower very high triglyceride (fat) levels in adults.

Take LOVAZA capsules whole.

Take LOVAZA exactly as your doctor tells you to take it

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Do not take LOVAZA if you are allergic to omega-3-acid ethyl esters or any ingredient in LOVAZA

Tell your doctor if you are allergic to fish or shellfish, or if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or plan to become pregnant or breastfeed as LOVAZA may not be right for you

Talk to your doctor about any current medical conditions and any medications you are taking, especially those that may increase your risk of bleeding

Take LOVAZA exactly as your doctor tells you to take it You should not take more than 4 capsules of LOVAZA each day

Your healthcare provider should do blood tests to check your triglyceride, bad cholesterol and liver function levels while you take LOVAZA

LOVAZA may cause serious side effects including increases in
- results of blood tests to check your liver function (ALT and AST) and your bad cholesterol levels (LDL-C)
- frequency of a heart rhythm problem (atrial fibrillation or flutter) that may especially happen in the first few months of taking LOVAZA if you already have that problem.

The most common side effects include burping, upset stomach, and change in sense of taste.

How supplied: 1-gram capsule

LOVAZA®
omega-3-acid ethyl esters

For more information, visit LOVAZA.com or call 1-877-LOVAZA1

Please see Important Patient Information on the next page
You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA
Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088

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GSK for you
If you don't have prescription coverage and can't afford your medicine, visit GSKforyou.com or call 1-866-475-3679

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 98

PATIENT INFORMATION
LOVAZA® (lo-va-za)
(omega-3-acid ethyl esters) Capsules

LOVAZA
omega-3-acid ethyl esters

Read this Patient Information before you start taking LOVAZA, and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or your treatment.

What is LOVAZA?

LOVAZA is a prescription medicine used along with a low fat and low cholesterol diet to lower very high triglyceride (fat) levels in adults

It is not known if LOVAZA prevents you from having a heart attack or stroke

It is not known if LOVAZA is safe and effective in children

Who should not take LOVAZA?

Do not take LOVAZA if you are allergic to omega 3-acid ethyl esters or any of the ingredients in LOVAZA. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in LOVAZA.

What should I tell my doctor before taking LOVAZA?

Before you take LOVAZA, tell your doctor if you:

- have diabetes
- have a low thyroid problem (hypothyroidism)
- have a liver problem
- have a pancreas problem
- have a certain heart rhythm problem called atrial fibrillation or flutter
- are allergic to fish or shellfish. It is not known if people who are allergic to fish or shellfish are also allergic to LOVAZA.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if LOVAZA will harm your unborn baby
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if LOVAZA passes into your breast milk. You and your doctor should decide if you will take LOVAZA or breastfeed

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicine, vitamins, and herbal supplements

LOVAZA can interact with certain other medicines that you are taking. Using LOVAZA with medicines that affect blood clotting (anticoagulants or blood thinners) may cause serious side effects

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your doctor and pharmacist when you get a new medicine

How should I take LOVAZA?

- Take LOVAZA exactly as your doctor tells you to take it.
- You should not take more than 4 capsules of LOVAZA each day. Either take all 4 capsules at one time, or 2 capsules two times a day
- Do not change your dose or stop LOVAZA without talking to your doctor
- Take LOVAZA with or without food.
- Take LOVAZA capsules whole. Do not break, crush, dissolve, or chew LOVAZA capsules before swallowing. If you cannot swallow LOVAZA capsules whole, tell your doctor. You may need a different medicine
- Your doctor should start you on a low fat and low cholesterol diet before giving you LOVAZA. Stay on a low fat and low cholesterol diet while you take LOVAZA.
- Your doctor should do blood tests to check your triglyceride, bad cholesterol, and liver function levels while you take LOVAZA.

What are the possible side effects of LOVAZA?

LOVAZA may cause serious side effects, including:

- increases in the results of blood tests used to check your liver function (ALT and AST) and your bad cholesterol levels (LDL-C) cholesterol
- increases in the frequency of a heart rhythm problem (atrial fibrillation or flutter) may especially happen in the first few months of taking LOVAZA if you already have that problem

The most common side effects of LOVAZA include

- burping
- upset stomach
- a change in your sense of taste

Talk to your doctor if you have a side effect that bothers you or does not go away

These are not all the possible side effects of LOVAZA. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088

How should I store LOVAZA?

- Store LOVAZA at room temperature between 68°F to 77°F (20°C to 25°C)
- Do not freeze LOVAZA.
- Safely throw away medicine that is out of date or no longer needed.
- **Keep LOVAZA and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

General information about the safe and effective use of LOVAZA

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information leaflet. Do not use LOVAZA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give LOVAZA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This Patient Information Leaflet summarizes the most important information about LOVAZA. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about LOVAZA that is written for health professionals.

For more information go to www.LOVAZA.com or call 1-888-825-5249

What are the ingredients in LOVAZA?

Active ingredient: omega-3-acid ethyl esters, mostly EPA and DHA

Inactive ingredients: alpha-tocopherol (in soybean oil), gelatin, glycerol, purified water

This patient labeling has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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All-New House Calls

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Quirky cottage-style home office

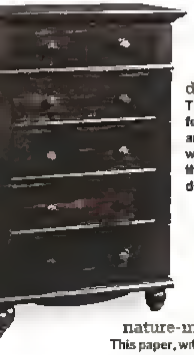
Earthy florals, wood, and stone mingle with an industrial metal desk for an updated take on an English farmhouse look. Here's how to re-create it on a budget BY GILLIAN BARTH

A home office should be functional, but not at the expense of character—or even a little risk-taking. The design of this workspace, for example, is traditional English cottage style with a twist. It's where nature-inspired wallpaper and 19th-century antiques, such as a spindle-back armchair and a rustic pine chest, take supporting roles to a scene-stealing mid-century brushed-steel desk with an industrial edge.

"There's a quirky juxtaposition of styles and periods, but the harmonious colors and weathered finishes make it work," says Ros Byam Shaw, author of *Perfect English Farmhouse* (Ryland Peters & Small), which features this room. The contrasts continue with accessories such as a graphic flat-weave rug, which enlivens and warms up the limestone-paver floor. Keep reading for ways to strike a similarly pleasing balance in your home office.

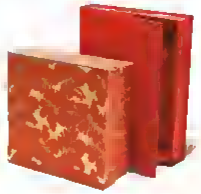
vintage-look clock
Hang a stately timekeeper with spade hands and oversize Roman numerals that are easy to read from a distance. $21; wayfair.com

distressed chest
Trade a nondescript filing cabinet for a tall dresser to stow papers and supplies. This one has a weathered finish that resembles the homeowner's antique pine dresser. $179; walmart.com



nature-inspired wallpaper
This paper, with a bird-and-fern print, echoes the pattern on the designer version at right but for less than half the price. $42 a roll; thibautdesign.com

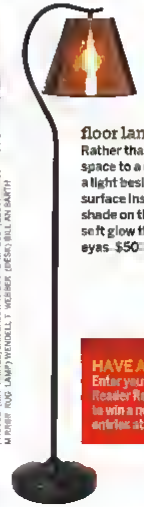
storage boxes
Stash bills in decorative containers to tidy up your desk. Red linen box, $29; bookbinders.com. Floral papar box, $12; paperpresentation.com



spindle-back armchair
The homeowner's was an antiques-market find, but this boxy American Windsor chair has similar lines. An embroidered pillow makes it comfy. Chair, $197; wayfair.com. Pillow, $30; pier1.com

mid-century steel desk
Instead of paying $1,000 or more for a restored industrial-style desk, get one in used condition and fix it up yourself. We found this beige one for $275 at Build It Green!, a reuse center in New York City. Remove old paint with an eco stripper, such as SoyGel. Then buff the bare steel to a soft sheen with a random-orbit sander, and top with clear polyurethane to prevent rust.

oval mirror
Reflective surfaces make a small office seem spacious. This look-alike of the wood-frame mirror at left has a lightweight resin surround, so it's a cinch to hang. $30; kirklands.com



floor lamp
Rather than relinquishing space to a desk lamp, stand a light beside your work surface instead. The mica shade on this one radiates a soft glow that's easy on the eyes. $50; target.com

colorful kilim
Warm up a tile floor with a patterned rug. This hand-knotted wool version has a bold geometric in greens, tans, and reds. $127; overstock.com

PHOTOS: (MAIN IMAGE) JAN BALDWIN; (LOOK, WALLPAPER, CHAIR, AND PILLOW) MARK WEBER; (DESK) BILL ARTH; (RUG, LAMP) WENDELL T. WEBBER

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Fireplace face-lift for just $87

A blah brick hearth gets a cheery cottage-style refresher with some clever DIY woodwork and a high-contrast paint job By MEGAN BAKER

before The flat, gray-painted brick surround and the tiny mantelshelf lacked both dimension and proportion. **after** White wood trim brightens the fireplace, which is accented by a rustic mantelshelf; a black painted firebox adds depth

the project tally

Removed the woodstove painted the firebox brick border and hearth with black heat resistant paint they had on hand	$0
Created a flat face for the new mantel by gluing up sheets of lauan plywood	$33
Added mantel legs with 1-by-4-inch MDF cut to length and glued in place	$10
Made a top panel from ¼ inch poplar	$15
Filled all the seams with paintable caulk	$3
Helped the woodwork pop with a coat of white paint	$13
Boxed out the existing mantel shelf with stock pine lumber that they distressed and stained themselves for a rustic look.	$13
total	$87

SHARE YOUR REMODEL
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A fireplace should steal the show in a living room, not drag it down. At Kevin and Layla Palmer's 1950s home, in Prattville, Alabama, the gathering space's dreary gray fireplace was more homely than homey. And once the room's knotty pine walls got a much-needed coat of cream-colored paint and the wall-to-wall carpet was pulled up to reveal warm oak floors, the fireplace became even more of an eyesore. To turn it into a centerpiece, Kevin and Layla first opened it up by removing the bulky woodstove. Though they never used the fireplace, they wanted to refurbish it to code, so they painted the firebox and surrounding brick with black heat-resistant paint. Next they built a mantel by gluing lauan plywood to the rest of the brick surface, creating legs with 1-inch-thick medium-density fiberboard (MDF) ripped 4 inches wide for stiles and rails. They added thinner, ¼-inch panel frames between the legs and, for extra dimension, glued a strip of MDF above the firebox and another one below the mantelshelf, then painted the whole assembly white. A rustic new mantelshelf—inspired by old railroad ties—sits on top and was created by boxing out the existing shelf with distressed, stained pine boards. "It just jumps off the wall," Kevin says of the new fireplace. "It was so drab before, but now it's the first thing you see."

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE DIRECTORY PAGE 58

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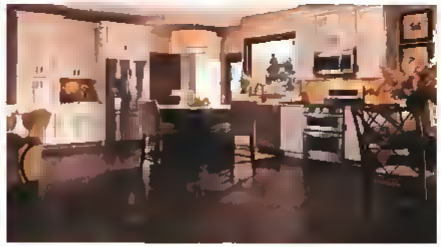

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Five no-fail palettes for colorful kitchens

Drenching a cook space in color can be tricky, but that's no reason to hold back. Here, five winning combos from our pros. By JILL CONNORS

White cabinets and safe wall colors? They're a no-brainer. Which is why all your neighbors have them. But with a little imagination and our paint-color know-how, you can mix it up in the kitchen to give it a whole new mood, just think about the feeling you're after, from warm and lively to calm and collected.

We like palettes with a strong personality. They stand up well to today's favored finishes, from stone and butcher-block countertops to stainless-steel appliances to gleaming honey-colored or ebonized floors. Got stained-wood cabinets that you just can't cover? Simply identify their predominant shade—yellow, orange, red, brown—and assemble your palette around it. Read on for color combos sure to turn any cook space into something special.

1. Lively greens

Yellow-based greens feel sunny and inviting. "With lots of crisp white trim, apple and olive greens can be really refreshing," says Kathryn Precourt, an interior designer based in Ashfield, Massachusetts. Precourt notes that such greens are popular today because they evoke nature and the environment and so have positive associations. In this high-ceilinged space, two vibrant shades warm up stainless-steel appliances while an abundance of white-painted surfaces keeps them from seeming too bright. These high-voltage hues also add energy to the room by ramping up the available natural light.

Granny Smith
GLIDDEN

Spanish Olive
GLIDDEN

PHOTO: JOHNNY BOUCHER/JAP INTERIORS. (ALL PAINT BANDS) BRIAN HENRY/T.ME INC. DIGITAL STUDIO

Refresh
SHERWIN WILLIAMS

Springtime
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2_ Soothing vintage blues and greens

Soft, optimistic shades of blue and green bring the outdoors in and can make a kitchen visually interesting in a subtler way than higher-contrast two-color schemes. In the kitchen shown here, cheerful bands of green and blue add pep to a compact workspace and bland wall with wood countertops and floors that have warm amber and cherry undertones. These casual, comforting colors have an inherent versatility, says Dorianna West Farzan, an architectural designer and colorist in Newport, Rhode Island, and can be equally at home in a seaside setting or a vintage cottage or amid retro furnishings.

Italian Blue
PRATT & LAMBERT

Red Rhythm
PRATT & LAMBERT

Reed Yellow
PRATT & LAMBERT

3_ Bold red, plus two more

The trick when using three paint colors is to balance their intensity and keep nonpainted surfaces uniform, says Seattle architect and interior designer Sheri Newbold. Graduated saturations help make this colorful scheme work. The energetic red is bright, the blue is a midtone, and the yellow is a softer shade. Uninterrupted stretches of sophisticated black countertops, honey-colored flooring, and consistent cabinet and window trim contribute to the room's well-composed, orderly feeling. The repeating pattern in the tile backsplash ties the three colors together.

Honeywheat
BENJAMIN MOORE

Pennies From Heaven
BENJAMIN MOORE

4_ Warm harvest hues

For years, kitchen designers have noticed how beautifully three colors borrowed from items in the produce aisle—carrots, corn, and peas—can create hearth-like warmth in a cooking and gathering space. These colors are especially effective in taking the chill off stainless steel and in bringing out the rich tones in wood floors or ceiling beams. "Choose one of these hues if you have a small kitchen and don't want to divide it up," says Doty Horn, a color consultant in the New York City area. "Use two or all three if your kitchen is larger." Carrots and corn flavor the kitchen shown here, with only the slightest hint of peas in the striped runners, which could easily be amplified with more green accents.

Chinese Porcelain
PPG PITTSBURGH PAINTS

Blue Bows
PPG PITTSBURGH PAINTS

5_ Elegant shades of blue

Rich, saturated shades of blue have a time-honored, traditional look and evoke Chinese porcelain, says Josette Bulsson, a color forecaster who works with PPG Pittsburgh Paints. Bulsson, who says she is seeing more of these blues in living rooms and kitchens, likes to layer dark and midtone indigos for an understated elegance similar to the effect in the space shown here. The blues on the walls and cabinets are unified by a blue-and-white tile mural and extend an element of formality from the open dining room into the cook space, an effect that is reinforced by black countertops and chairs and a table painted navy blue. ■

SHARE YOUR PAINT IDEAS.
Enter your creative paint project in our Reader Remodel Contest for a chance to win a new pickup and cash. Post entries at thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH

PHOTOS: TRIPTI RAGOVAN/RAP INTERIORS, (BOTTOM) CHRIS TUBBS/LRUPE MARES; (DIPPIS TE PAGE, TOP) TRIA GIOVAN; (BOTTOM) SHEILA ANELLMAN

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For a sneak peek, scan this tag:

Finding the right finish

Staining interior woodwork is a process of trial and error, even for the This Old House TV project pros. Here’s how they got the look they were after—and how you can get great results every time

By DEBORAH SNOONIAN • Photographs by ANTHONY TIEULI

It may look period-perfect from the outside, but the interior of the current *TOH* TV project house, an 1887 Queen Anne in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is getting a unique look of its own from a completely different era. Since so many of the original decorative details inside the house had been stripped away during previous renovations, owners Sally Peterson and John Stone decided to convert its look to the modern Scandinavian style, pioneered in the 1950s, that Sally had admired for years. “Though I was born in the U.S., my family is Swedish,” she says. “I’ve been to Sweden to visit extended family, and it’s where I became drawn to clean, simple, functional design.”

Among the many elements the couple is incorporating from this style is whitewashed woodwork, including built-in cabinetry in the dining and living areas, and wood ceilings in the living room and parts of the kitchen and master suite. “Clear-stained or whitewashed wood surfaces are often used to add texture and warmth to the simple white interiors

LEFT: Painter Maure Hennque shows *TOH* general contractor Tom Silva samples of whitewashed wood that he prepared using various types of stains and clear finishes. It took him a few tries using different products to get the look that Sally and John wanted. ABOVE: Mauro sprays a clear finish onto the whitewashed pine ceiling in the living room to protect the wood and the finish. “I do this when other workers aren’t there, so there’s no construction dust flying around to interfere,” he says.

common in Scandinavian design," says Dee Elms of Terrat Elms Design, the project's interior designer. Though the factory-built cabinetry is being finished off-site using a translucent, oil-based stain and sealer, the ceilings and handrail are being finished in place. So *TOH* general contractor Tom Silva asked painting contractor Mauro Henrique to develop a match for the whitewashed cabinetry finish that Sally and John had approved.

Even experts like Mauro and *TOH* master carpenter Norm Abram, who has 30-plus years of woodworking and furnituremaking under his tool belt, agree that staining wood involves as much art as science. "You've got lots of variables: the color of the wood, its porosity and graining, the color of the stain, whether it's oil- or water-based," says Norm. "It takes patience to get all these elements lined up to your liking."

Fortunately the first step—finding the right wood for the built-ins, ceilings, and handrail—was straightforward. Oak or birch are more common in Scandinavian design, but here, southern yellow pine emerged as the clear winner for both cost and aesthetics. The pine is not a single type of tree but rather a group of species native to the southeastern United States that are common and easy to mill. It's a popular choice for interior finishes in American homes, says Dee, and Sally and John liked its unique horizontal graining.

The couple asked Tom and Mauro to highlight the grain and tone down its yellowish cast. Armed with pieces of whitewashed pine from the cabinet manufacturer to match and unfinished sample boards of his own, Mauro got down to business. For his first experiment, he used a water-based white transparent stain followed by two coats of water-based polyurethane clear finish. Too dull, came the verdict. "Water-based stains aren't absorbed as readily as oil-based ones," says Mauro, "so it's possible that the stain sat on top of the wood and obscured the grain too much, as a paint would do."

He got better results when he switched to an oil-based stain, but he paired it with the same water-based clear finish. "An oil-based clear finish can give the wood a slightly yellow tone, which Sally and John didn't want," says Mauro. Only after crafting several samples with more (and fewer) coats of stain and finish did he finally perfect the technique, imparting a subtle milky-white color to the pine that downplayed its yellow and honey undertones and brought the grain into sharp focus.

Now in place, the living room's wood ceiling comes as an unexpected touch that makes this all-white room seem a bit cozier and homier—even unfurnished. "It took us a while to get there, but it has just the effect we'd hoped for," says Sally.

How he did it

Like the look of the wood ceiling? Try Mauro's technique

1: Using 150-grit sandpaper, Mauro roughed up the pine's surface to open its pores, then wiped away sawdust with a tack cloth.
2: Using a natural-bristle brush, he applied a thin layer of Zar oil-based stain in Country White and let it rest for 2 to 3 minutes so that it could seep into the wood's pores.
3: Working in the direction of the grain, he wiped away the unabsorbed stain with a clean rag. After it dried, he repeated Steps 2 and 3 to give the wood a whiter, brighter look.
4: Using a synthetic-bristle brush, he applied two coats of water-based acrylic finish. (He used a pro-grade product, Minwax's Polycrylic Protective Finish; would give similar results.)

Norm's top tips for staining interior woodwork

Follow these rules of thumb when experimenting, and you'll achieve a perfect finish every time.

Remove hardware, such as knobs and hinges, before starting. A stain might change the color of the metal, and, unlike paint, you can't just peel it off when it's dry.

Make sure your workspace is well ventilated and relatively dry. Hot, humid days are not ideal for staining, as the airborne moisture interferes with drying. Use a fan or open a window to keep air circulating; if the weather's right, you can work outdoors. When using oil-based products, wear a respirator to avoid inhaling harmful fumes.

Know how water-based and oil-based stains differ. The right pick for your project is largely a matter of preference. Water-based stains are low in odor, clean up with soap and water, and dry a lot faster, so if you're not careful, they can leave lap marks or streaks from application. Plus, you'll need to lightly sand the wood between coats to knock back the grain. Oil-based stains have a longer working time, giving you more control over the finished look, but they release fumes and must be cleaned up with solvents. Both types have to be topped with a protective clear coat to safeguard the wood and the finish.

Always test first. The same stain-and-finish combo can look very different when applied to woods of different species and colors—and even to woods that are prepped with sandpaper of varying grits. "It's a trial-and-error process," says Norm. Test either in a small, unobtrusive area of your project, or make samples of the same species so that you can try out different options side by side. Use the same prep technique on your project and your samples.

When in doubt, go lighter. Unlike paint, you can't cover up a dark stain with a light one. So if you're not sure if that chocolate-brown tone is really your thing, opt for a medium-brown one first.

Experiment with different application methods—a bristle brush, a foam brush, a sprayer, or even a rag. You can swab on stain with strokes that are parallel or perpendicular to the wood's grain; if using a rag, you can use light or heavy pressure, depending on how much color you want the wood to absorb. Which technique is best? "Whatever method gives you the look you want," says Norm. Keep notes on the techniques you use when making samples so that you can replicate the results when doing the project.

Always wipe off unabsorbed stain in the direction of the grain. Rubbing against the wood's grain or in circles could create uneven swirl marks or blotches. And never let unabsorbed stain dry on the wood, as it will just peel off once the solvent evaporates.

The longer stain sits on wood, the deeper the finish will be. You can also apply multiple coats of stain for the same effect, as Mauro did. To get a consistent look and color, use a timer to make sure you're wiping off the excess after the same interval for each area.

Use a stain and a finish with the same solvent. Oil-based finishes don't adhere to water-based stains if the moisture hasn't fully evaporated from the latter. Adding a water-based finish over an oil-based stain can work if the products are compatible, but it's better to leave this technique to a pro. Err on the safe side by choosing like solvents for both. ■

PHOTO: MICHAEL LEWIS

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PROJECT OF THE WEEK

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HOW TO INSTALL A MANTEL

A fireplace mantel is one of the best ways to turn an ordinary living room into an elegant and refined space. Like an ornate frame around a pretty picture, a mantel should enhance the fireplace while adding its own style and interest to the room. It also can provide ample shelf space for pictures, books, and candles.

Consider using a mantel that comes in a kit and locks together. To hang it on the wall, you simply attach it to a couple of screwed-on pieces of lumber. The whole job takes less than a day.

You'll find a huge selection of tools to help with this or any home project at The Home Depot nearest you.

For easy how-to instructions and a list of the tools and materials you'll need, go to thisoldhouse.com/project

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Build a columned room divider

Use MDF panels and wood molding to transform your entry with a stately new built-in By CODY CALAMAIO • Photographs by RYAN BENYI

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Difficulty: Medium. Stacking built boxes saves time, but your mitering skills must be sharp

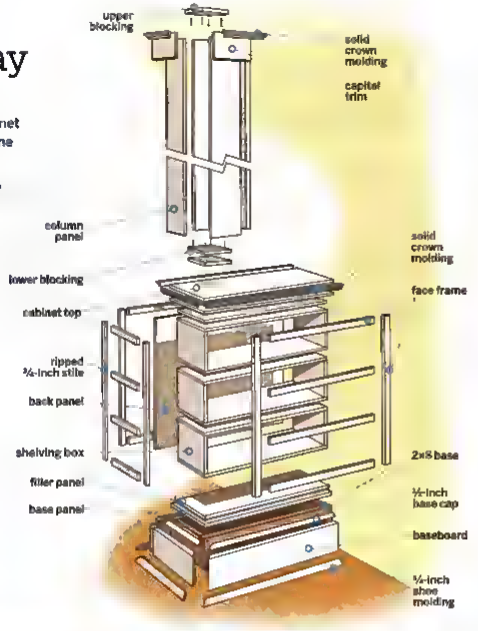
Not every home is blessed with a grand entryway. If your front door swings open directly into the living space, it can make for rather abrupt arrivals. A columned room divider creates an architectural feature that will gently redirect foot traffic while providing extra storage for books or even boots. Follow along with *This Old House* contributor Christopher Beidel, owner of Pernt, a handmade-furniture company in Brooklyn, New York, as he shows you how to construct a partition that will look right at home in your place.

For complete instructions, turn the page

Day-to-day timeline

SATURDAY Stack the cabinet boxes and add the face frame (Steps 1–4)

SUNDAY Build the column, and cut and install the trim (Steps 5–7)



tools

tape measure
straightedge
clamps
circular saw
caulk gun
drill/driver
countersink bit
4-foot level
pneumatic brad nailer and air compressor
combination square
miter saw

materials

¾ inch medium-density fiberboard (MDF) Get three 4-by 8-foot sheets for an 8½-foot ceiling
2×8 lumber to build the base
shims
solid crown molding to trim the capital and the cabinet top
baseboard molding
½-inch and ¾-inch quarter-round molding for the base cap and shoe molding
1½-inch MDF screws to assemble the boxes
2½-inch deck screws to install the base and the blocking
1¼ inch brad nails
construction adhesive
wood filler and **paintable caulk**
primer and **paint**

1. Build the boxes

A. **Cut the parts.** The body of the cabinet is made up of three identical boxes stacked on top of one another to form shelves. Take your MDF stock, clamp a straightedge in place, and use a circular saw to cut each piece according to the cut list at thisoldhouse.com/bonus. Also cut the four base pieces; we used 2×8s to match the height of the existing 1×8 baseboard.

B. **Assemble the boxes.** For each box, the top and bottom capture the sides. Lay the bottom piece on a workbench, run a bead of construction adhesive along the edge of one side piece, then clamp it upright to form an L with the bottom. Repeat on the other end. Tip the assembly so that you can countersink pilot holes for 1½-inch MDF screws through the bottom and into the edges of the sides. Drive the screws and remove the clamps. Set the assembly upright. Apply construction adhesive to the top edges of the sides, and set the top in place. Clamp it down at each side, countersink pilot holes, and screw it in place, as shown.

ILLUSTRATION: GREGORY NEMEC

2. Install the base

A. **Level the base.** Build the 2×8 base with 2½-inch deck screws. Remove any existing baseboard molding from the wall, place the base directly on the floor and against the wall, and shim it level. Rest a 4-foot level diagonally across the corners as shown, to check for level.

B. **Attach the base.** Fasten the base to the floor by toenailing deck screws through the exposed end of the base and the shims, as shown. Screw through the other end of the base and into the wall. Then score the shims and snap them off.

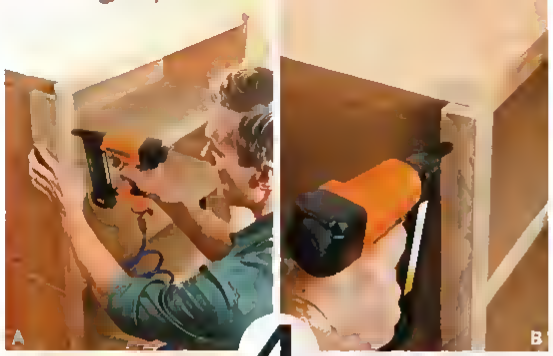
Tip Slide the shims from the inside of the base outward so that the screws will catch the meatier ends. This also makes it easier to snap off the exposed, thinner ends of the shims.

3. Stack the layers

A. **Cap the base.** Run a bead of construct on adhesive along the top of the base and cover it with a panel of MDF. Countersink pilot holes and drive MDF screws through the panel to secure it. Then, to account for the height of the 1×2 face-frame trim, add an MDF filler panel. Use scrap trim to inset it ¾ inch from the front and the end; inset it 1½ inches along the back edge to accommodate the back panel plus the trim. And to allow for out-of-plumb walls, leave a ¾-inch gap at the wall end; it will be covered by a face-frame stile in Step 4A. Secure the filler panel with construction adhesive and countersunk MDF screws at each corner.

B. **Stack the boxes.** Apply construction adhesive on top of the filler panel and stack the first box, aligned at the edges. Tack it in place with a pneumatic brad nailer and 1¼-inch brad nails. Stack and fasten the next two boxes in the same way. Shim the gap between the top box and the wall, then drive at least one deck screw through the box and shims and into a stud or an anchor. Make sure the top box is level, then glue and nail another filler panel on top.

C. **Attach the back.** Measure and cut an MDF panel to cover the back of the stack and meet the wall. Apply construction adhesive to the back edges of the boxes, and clamp the panel in place. Countersink pilot holes and secure the panel with MDF screws.



4. Finish the cabinet

A. Install the face frame. We ripped 1½-inch strips from leftover ¾ inch MDF but you could also use 1×2 trim. Either way, measure and cut the front and back stiles to length. If necessary, scribe and trim the wall side stiles to follow the wall's contour. For the outside stiles, use a scrap of ¾ inch MDF to stand in for the abutting stile to be installed in the next step, as shown. Glue and nail the stiles in place; they should end up flush with the inside edges of the shelves on the front.

B. Rip the end stiles. To make the trim end up the same width on both sides of the corners where the stiles meet, rip two pieces ¾ inch wide. Glue and nail them in place, as shown. Now measure, cut, and install the four front rails, four end rails, and two back rails.

C. Install the top. Measure and cut two additional panels of MDF sized to sit flush with the face frame. Glue and nail them in place. This last layer serves as your cabinet top and as a nailing surface for the solid crown molding that goes on in Step 7B.

5. Lay out the column

A. Install the lower blocking. To find the location for the column's two lower nailing blocks, subtract the width of a block from the width of the cabinet top, then divide the result in half. Use a combination square to transfer this measurement to three sides of the cabinet top, as shown. Glue and screw the blocks in place, one at a time.

B. Size the column. Measure the distance between the cabinet and your ceiling and cut the four MDF column panels to fit. Two should be the same width as the lower blocking, and the other two 1½ inches wider to capture the edges of the first two. Clamp the base of one of the panels to the blocking, then clamp a 4-foot level to its face. Plumb the panel, then mark where its inside face meets the ceiling, as shown.

see how it's done
To watch a video of this project, including extra footage of working around a receptacle, go to thisoldhouse.com/bonus

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 98

6. Install the column

A. Mount the upper blocking. Run a line of construction adhesive along the edge of an abutting column panel, and join it to the first to form a corner. Nail the joint together. Clamp a level to the new piece and check both levels to plumb the column assembly. Apply construction adhesive to the block and position it into the L-shaped crook, then drill pilot holes and screw it to the ceiling with deck screws. We were lucky enough to catch a ceiling joist, but you may need to use toggle bolts to fasten the block securely.

B. Assemble the column. Countersink pilot holes through the tops of the column assembly and into the upper blocking, then screw them in place with MDF screws. At the bottom, tack the panels to the lower blocking with brad nails. Then glue and secure the two remaining sides of the column in the same fashion.

7. Trim out the divider

A. Install the capital. To finish the top of the column, measure and cut the capital pieces to fit. Use clamps to hold the longer pieces in place, to give you something to butt the shorter pieces into. Glue and nail each piece in place.

B. Install the crown. To trim the top of the capital, measure one side, use a miter saw to cut a piece of solid crown molding at 45 degrees on each end, and install it with adhesive and brad nails. Continue measuring, cutting, and installing each side as you go. To trim the cabinet top, measure its long edges and miter-cut pieces of crown to fit—90 degrees at the wall and 45 degrees at the end. Glue and nail them in place. Measure and miter-cut the end piece to fit between the two mitered ends, then install it with adhesive and brad nails.

C. Install the baseboard molding. Follow the same approach to install the baseboard: front and back first, then the piece that's mitered on both ends. Cut pieces to fit along the exposed wall and install those. Install the base cap—½-inch quarter-round molding in this case—the same way. Then cover any gaps along the floor by installing the ¾-inch shoe molding. Finally, fill the nail holes and caulk the joints and seams; sand everything smooth, and prime and paint the entire structure.

UPDATING A COZY CRAFTSMAN

The once beaten-down bungalow, a former student rental, finally found its fixer in an avid DIYer who brought back its charm, building 52 kitchen cabinets, 38 dovetail drawers, and many walls of built-ins along the way

By Jill Connors + Photographs by Lisa Romerein + Produced by Colette Scanlon + Styling by Caryl Eagle

OPPOSITE: In the foyer, original elements blend with updates. The existing stairway, wainscot and box-beam ceiling were cleaned up with paint and the stair treads refinished. New oak floors were stained a dark English chestnut. **THIS PAGE** The living room fireplace got a new slate-tile surround and wood mantel over formerly built-up brick. Light fixtures throughout the house are Craftsman-style reproductions.

For serial remodelers, the "next one" always holds the promise of being the "best one"—a chance to learn from past mistakes, improve DIY techniques, and reap the satisfaction of a glorious end result. For Aaron Cover, a Web designer who has renovated seven houses in 13 years, the redo of this 1916 Craftsman was definitely his biggest undertaking to date. And deciding to do all the cabinetry himself nearly did him in.

It seemed like a good idea at the time. With four Dallas house renovations and two San Diego, California, redos under his belt, he set his sights on the two-story stucco-and-shingle Craftsman with its compelling location—directly across the street from a golf course, overlooking Balboa Park and, in the distance, the San Diego harbor. The house was a hard-luck fixer-upper. Previous owners had chopped up the layout in order to rent rooms to college students.

Aaron saw the possibilities immediately, envisioning a house that combined the authenticity of original architectural details with newer open spaces that suit today's lifestyle. He figured that he already had most of the skills and the tools for the work that was needed. He could repair and refinish the wainscoting and the boxed-beam ceilings in the foyer, living room, and dining room. And he could deconstruct and remove the warren of small bedrooms and bathrooms that the previous owners had created to rent out rooms. Having done plenty of tile work on previous renovations, he could do the tiling that the new baths would require. And he had mastered the art of low-cost concrete countertops.

But the two things Aaron wanted most would stretch his skills and his budget: a big, airy kitchen with plenty of storage, natural light, and traffic flow for entertaining; and a second-floor master suite with ample closet space and a spa-like bath. A wild thought

original open plan

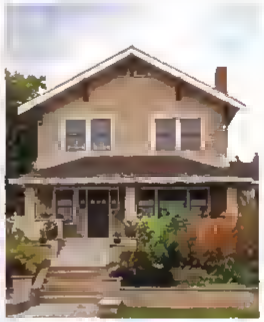
All the trim, door and window casings, wainscoting, and half-height built-in bookcases—which form partitions from foyer to living room to dining room—were repaired and refinished with white paint, which adds to the fresh, updated feel of the spaces.

ready for guests

To ease entertaining and channel natural light between the existing dining room and the new kitchen, the homeowner built a pass-through where an exterior wall once stood. Double doorways are located where two windows had been. The kitchen side of the pass-through holds a wet bar with refrigerator drawers and wine storage.

good as old

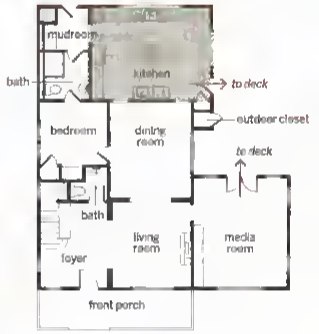
The 1916 Craftsman's facade has its original cedar shingles, which had been preserved under aluminum siding on the upper story. The stucco covering the first floor needed repair; the street-level walls are new.



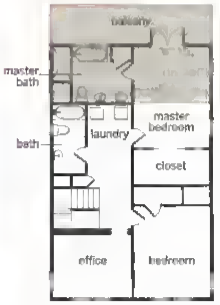
FLOOR PLANS

The nearly 500 square feet of living space added in back is split between the kitchen and the upstairs master suite, which also has a full-width balcony.

1st floor



2nd floor



scale 5' = addition

FLOOR PLANS: AN WORPOLE

took hold. To compensate for the cost of the two-story addition—a pro job that in California would involve adhering to earthquake code—he'd make all the cabinetry himself.

"I'm not sure what I was thinking," Aaron says now, with a laugh. "But with every house I remodeled, I saw the price of semicustom kitchen cabinets get 20 percent more expensive and the quality get worse. So I thought, *I can do this.*"

Aaron created all his design drawings for the floor plans and the cabinetry in Adobe Illustrator, software he used extensively in his Web-design business. He exported his drawings for the addition into CAD (computer-aided design) software to send to a structural engineer, who specified a steel beam in the new kitchen ceiling to satisfy building and earthquake code. For the addition's foundation and framing, he hired contractors. Then he rolled up his sleeves.

To start the cabinetry, he bought a jig and a router, setting them up with his old reliables—table saw, miter saw, sanders—in a makeshift workshop under a tent-pole cabana in the backyard. Relying on books and online tutorials, he went through "lots of trial and error" to make the first full-inset dovetail-drawer prototype. "I found out then why people more often do overlay doors and drawers," Aaron says now. "It's a lot easier!"

In retrospect, the sheer volume of work was staggering. He crafted every kitchen cabinet and drawer, including lots of custom pullouts and appliance garages and, later, all the bathroom vanities, every master-closet organizer, a media wall, and a full mudroom of built-ins. Meanwhile, for nine months his "kitchen" consisted of a refrigerator in the dining room and a stove in the middle of the new concrete slab.

On the plus side, Aaron estimates he spent only $4,000 to $5,000 in cabinetry materials for the kitchen—birch plywood for the boxes and drawers and solid maple for the fronts. On the minus side: "I had no idea how much

"I wanted a big, open kitchen where friends could gather."

—AARON COVER, HOMEOWNER

updated cook space Homeowner Aaron Cover relaxes—at last! in his new open and airy 15-by-20-foot kitchen, surrounded by proof of his DIY chops. He made every cabinet and drawer, poured and installed the concrete counters (OPPOSITE, LEFT), designed, cut, and laid the slate-tile floor (OPPOSITE, RIGHT), and installed the subway tile backsplash.

exit this way Base cabinets in the mudroom hold tilt-out recycling bins. Handcrafted and installed by the homeowner, the drawers and random-pattern slate floor continue from the adjacent kitchen.

sanding there would be. My arm and hand went numb some days," he says. His image of the ideal kitchen—"a classic white kitchen with dark countertops, a subway-tile backsplash, and a slate floor"—was taking shape through sweat, grit, and sawdust.

Aaron then put another of his skills to work making the concrete counters—pouring them into a plywood mold and then turning them out like a cake—a technique he had mastered in previous renovations. "The key is having a number of large, strong friends who can help you turn the mold over and carry the countertop into place," he says. He also installed the backsplash and the floor—cutting 16-by-16-inch slate tiles into a pattern he created using Illustrator. "I wanted a twist on the traditional slate floor," he explains.

Turning his attention to other parts of the house, Aaron worked to instill a new Craftsman sensibility by restoring and re-creating original details. One of the tasks that he had been confident about when he first saw the house, however, turned into something of a nightmare. After rebuilding the half-wall bookcases between the living room and the foyer, all the columns, and the sections of wainscoting that had been damaged, he set about refinishing them. "But every stain I applied made the wood look like tiger-striped plywood," he recalls. "Even after sanding, an orange color came out, no matter what I did." In the end, he painted the half-wall dividers and wainscoting off-white, which he realized would help marry the new and old wood and give the house a more modern feeling. When he found that the box beams also didn't take stain well, he painted them dark charcoal.

tablet exclusive!

Want to see even more of hardworking homeowner Aaron Cover's house? Find more photos exclusively in our tablet edition. It's free for subscribers. Learn more at thisoldhouse.com/tablet

restful master suite About half of the 12-by-16-foot master bedroom is new square footage in the two-story addition. The master closet, with five light-frosted-glass pocket doors, is fitted with the first test-run cabinets Aaron made for the house. He reckoned that any mistakes wouldn't be on display in there.

sleek new bath Limestone tile lines the master bath walls and shower; quartzite tile covers the floor. The homeowner installed all the tile himself and made the vanity, medicine cabinets, and concrete counters.

There were unexpected bonuses. Although the first floor's existing oak flooring, only ⅜ inch thick, could not be salvaged due to termite and water damage, Aaron was thrilled when the second floor's ¾-inch-thick Douglas fir flooring turned out to be in excellent shape, thanks to years spent hidden under carpeting.

Some remodeling decisions were driven more by pragmatism than by historical authenticity. In the living room, he made the existing fireplace more prominent by adding a layer of slate to the surround and boxing out the mantel with wood. An extra layer of brick had already been added by previous owners, and Aaron feared he would pull the entire assembly off if he tried to remove it. "Adding the slate makes the fireplace a little grander and in keeping with the proportions of the room," he says. In the adjacent media room, a living area that had been added in the 1940s, he camouflaged the back of the fireplace chimney by fashioning a wall of built-ins surrounding a wall-mounted flat-screen television monitor.

The renovated Craftsman incorporates today's technology in other ways, as well. A new HVAC system—with ductwork ingeniously positioned in closet corners and wall cavities where opportunities presented themselves—ensures efficient heating and cooling, and an array of 36 photovoltaic panels was installed on the south-facing slope of the gable roof. "I basically don't have an electricity bill," says Aaron, who is as happy about that bottom-line benefit as he is about the overall look and feel of the two-year-long remodel. He is applying for historic status for the house and, while he awaits the verdict, is looking forward to celebrating its centenary, in just three years. Says the reformed—for now, anyway—serial renovator: "I'm here to stay." ■

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low-cost custom details

FROM DESIGN PROS' OWN HOMES

They may point their deep-pocketed clients toward high-end fixtures and finishes, but most architects and designers face the same real-world budget constraints as the rest of us. How do they handle it? By putting their creativity to work with everyday, low-cost materials. These special touches may inspire some clever ideas for your own interior

By Laura Fisher Kaiser

PHOTO: MARIKO REED

manila rope = DRAWER KNOBS

SCOTT LEE AND ERIN MARTIN, SAN FRANCISCO

Cost: $25

How They Did It: For his energy-efficient house architect Scott Lee turned to long-time collaborator Erin Martin to design the interiors. As part of her economical and green mandate, and to add a hint of texture to this sleek, neutral bath, she ditched the expected metal vanity pulls in favor of knotted lengths of ¼-inch manila rope made from durable natural fibers that she bought from a local marine-supply store. Each pull is threaded through a hole in the cabinet door or drawer and held in place by overhand knots on the front and back. "If the knots loosen, I use a bit of epoxy to hold them together," Martin says. "And the rope stands up well to bathroom humidity since it's tough enough to be used in ocean water."

wood brackets = CABINET AND HOOD SUPPORTS

ROBERT KELLY, PIEDMONT, CALIF.

Cost: $60

How He Did It: Call us flattered. Architect Robert Kelly saw a photo of a bracket-supported range hood in a *This Old House* book on kitchens and decided to make something similar. To find the perfect profile, he sketched designs at full size on cardboard and taped them in place. The short brackets supporting the upper cabinets are 2 inches thick, to improve the proportions of the long ones flanking the range. He beefed them up to 6 inches thick. Then he used a jigsaw to cut them out of plywood and Douglas fir, again using cardboard templates. These brackets take away the "factory-built" look of upper cabinets that float on the wall," he says. White paint for the brackets and cabinets ties all the pieces together.

flooring = WAINSCOTING

ERICA BRÖBERG SMITH, EAST NAMPTON, N.Y.

Cost: $0 in materials, $120 for labor

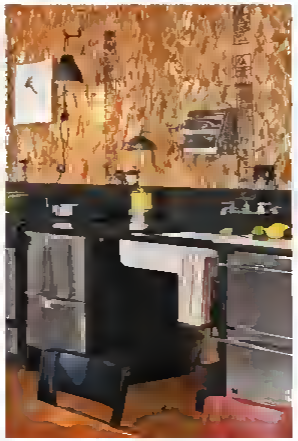
How She Did It: As she was renovating her home's first floor, architect Erica Bröberg Smith couldn't bear to part with the leftover wide-plank pine flooring she still had on hand. So she turned it into wainscoting on her eat-in kitchen's walls. For a more finished look, her contractor routed a bead to fit between the two horizontal boards and added a simple baseboard and cap. Bröberg Smith still hasn't decided whether to paint or pickle the wood, so in the meantime its natural look goes with just about any decorative scheme she dreams up for this space.

sheathing = WALL COVERING

JOSEPH KENNARD, BOSTON

Cost: $50

How He Did It: Architect Joseph Kennard wasn't yet sure where he wanted to mount items like wire shelving or a light over the sink when he was renovating his kitchen, so he needed a wall covering that was sturdy and inexpensive and would allow him to experiment. He opted for oriented strand board, a sheathing product with a textured-looking surface that's made from wood chips bound by adhesives. It's typically used beneath finished walls or floors like plywood is. Using drywall screws, he mounted ½-inch-thick 4-by-8-foot sheets to the walls behind his sink and cooktop. The material camouflages nail and screw holes, so I can relocate things without having to patch it up," he says.



stair treads = ISLAND TOP

RICK AND LIZ O'LEARY, CROTON FALLS, N.Y.

Cost: $75

How They Did It: When building an island for their farmhouse-style kitchen, designers Rick and Liz O'Leary chose a countertop made of stock southern-yellow-pine stair treads for several reasons. They were wallet-friendly, available at the local lumberyard, and ideal for the room's aesthetic. Plus, the prefab boards already had bullnose edges like many countertops do. Rick ripped three 1×12 boards to size, and a neighbor who's a retired master carpenter cut grooves in the long sides, inserted splines to hold the pieces together, and edge-glued them. Rick then bolted the boards across the grain, using threaded rods to keep them secured. After plugging the bolt holes with dowels and smoothing the surface with an orbital sander, Liz sealed the wood with food-grade mineral oil. "We expect the wood to move a bit naturally and to show wear and tear," Rick says, "but we're going for an aged look here, not something sleek and new."

PHOTOS (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT): ZALTON PIRTTELA (© BUTLER, PREMU)

PRETTY CLEVER YOURSELF? Share your custom-made projects for a chance to appear in our July reader-created issue. Post ideas at thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH

plywood subfloor = CUSTOM-PAINTED FLOOR

AMY DUTTON, PORTSMOUTH, N.H.

Cost: $400

How She Did It: Designer Amy Dutton admits that she wasn't ready to "spend money on the kitchen floor of my dreams" as she was reworking her 1910 bungalow. So she painted one instead, right onto the plywood subfloor. After caulking the seams between the sheets, she put down two coats of floor paint, then painted freehand tendrils and swirls that play off the colors of the area rugs and the vintage-table-turned-island. "Because the floor has such a large surface area, I came up with a pattern that suited the scale and filled up the space, pulling together elements from the room," she says. "The organic forms add interest and movement, and distract the eye from the plywood's seams." Even better, she can repaint when she gets tired of the look.

steel tubing = SINK SUPPORT

THADDEUS SIEMASKO, BEVERLY, MASS.

Cost: $200

How He Did It: For his ongoing kitchen renovation, architect Thaddeus Siemasko bartered with a client for a cast-iron vintage sink from his house in exchange for a donation to the client's favorite charity. He loved the sink's deep bowl and washboard top if not the lead-paint-covered cabinet that came with it. Instead of refinishing the cabinet, he ditched it entirely and bolted together a support frame of stainless-steel angles and rectangular steel tubing from an industrial catalog. "The open area gives me an easy-access spot for storing baskets of kitchen towels and other necessities," he says. The sink is anchored to the wall for stability.

stained glass and rope lighting = FAUX WINDOW

MICHAEL GRAY, ESSEX, MASS.

Cost: $400

How He Did It: Though architect Michael Gray wanted natural light in his master bathroom, he couldn't cut a window opening in the facade of his historic Second Empire home. So he built a recess between the wall studs, lined the perimeter with low-voltage rope lighting, and fronted it with a stained-glass window he'd bought years earlier and casing he'd salvaged from elsewhere in his house. "The soft glow from the window makes a great night-light," he says.

interior door = DINING TABLE

ROD GARRETT, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Cost: $200 for the base

How He Did It: When architect Rod Garrett's firm remodeled its offices, all the old furniture was sent to the scrap heap. But he fished out one freebie for himself, a solid-core maple-veneered door that had been used as a temporary drafting table during construction, and turned trash into treasure. Once he had lugged the 200-pound piece home, he applied green stain and a polyurethane finish and added metal trestle legs from a tool catalog for a DIY dining table that stands up to the wear and tear from his family of four. "With two boys, we needed a piece that was indestructible," he says. "But I also wanted it to look cool, and this fit the bill."

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HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CONTRACTOR

Ask homeowners and remodeling pros how to improve their working relationship, and you'll get an earful—along with some useful tips on how to keep your next project on time and on (or even under!) budget

BY **DEBORAH BALDWIN** ILLUSTRATIONS BY **CATHERINE MEURISSE**

Plus CLIENTS FROM HELL

Maybe you're shopping for the ideal helpmate to kick-start a new project or you're already knee-deep in one. You may be unsure how to manage your tradesman's expectations—and your own. These are the best of times and the worst of times for remodelers. Any pro still standing in this economy is likely to be seasoned and more attentive than ever to your bottom line. At the same time, many top pros are so battle-scarred by clients cutting corners that they may want references from you instead of the other way around. "I no longer do competitive bids," says David Lupberger, a 20-year veteran of the bidding wars in Boulder, Colorado, who prefers smart marketing and networking. But he also advises fellow contractors to keep their minds and tool chests open. "Homeowners aren't putting up many $100,000 additions," he says. "Be ready to help hang a mirror." So whether you're about to get a leaky faucet fixed or entrust your dream kitchen to total strangers, keep reading to learn the new rules of the game.

1 Use a pro to find a pro

You get your root canals from an expert recommended by your dentist, right? Same goes for locating remodeling pros. *This Old House* general contractor Tom Silva suggests asking the local building inspector for leads. Homeowner Jim Zembruski, in Easton, Connecticut, found his plumber through his electrician, they'd worked together for years. Zembruski also opened a contractor's account at the local lumberyard, which allowed him to hang out with the insider crowd, pick up pro tips, and listen for the names of tradesmen who were in there so often that they were presumably in high demand.

2 Try a little romance

First meetings are like first dates. Here's your chance to size up a pro and vice versa—so make a good impression. And take your time! Lupberger notes that some homeowners are in such a hurry to get on with it that they forget they're about to entrust their house keys—and their sanity—to a stranger. Eric Thompson, a general contractor in Hampton Bays, New York, is among those who stress the importance of a good personality fit. "It's like any relationship. It should feel natural and comfortable, like when I met my girlfriend." Maybe that's why HomeAdvisor, an agency that puts homeowners together with service providers, uses algorithms borrowed from Match.com.

3 Get your act together

One of the worst scenarios ever is asking an in-demand general contractor for "a rough estimate" when you don't know exactly what you want. Get a good designer or draftsman to translate your vague vision into drawings and specs. "Being decisive and clear on the details will save you money, and the project will be more likely to meet your expectations," says Monica D. Higgins of Renovation Planners, a construction management firm in Los Angeles. It will also help you avoid dreaded "change orders," code for pricey, unanticipated upgrade decisions. And for heaven's sake, leave your friends and relatives out of the design process, says Thompson, remembering the time he overheard three friends going around in circles as they "helped" with a kitchen remodel, all the while saying things like "You really like exposed beams?"

4 Learn to talk the talk

Figure out what your project involves before you call in a pro. "The more you understand about what they do, the better you can communicate with them and the better you can review their bids," says Zembruski, who uses how-to books, online videos, and magazines like *This Old House* to get up to speed. Part two of the education process: Ask any candidate for the job to explain how he or she plans to carry it out and which materials will be used. Giving a pro a chance to explain can foster collaboration and, who knows, maybe some creative thinking about how to do it for less. Impatience sends the wrong signal, says Lupberger. "It implies you're not interested in a working relationship."

5 Take the lowest bid? Fuhgeddabouddit

You want the best work, not the best price, says Lupberger. Contractors and subs who charge more are licensed and insured and should take the time to keep the homeowner informed every step of the way—all of which costs money. Watch out for a "low-bid guy" working out of his truck, says Thompson, adding ominously, "I've cleaned up many jobs." Angie Hicks, of the consumer-to-consumer referral service Angieslist.com, recommends at least three bids and close scrutiny of licences, insurance certificates, and other fine print. "I find people who never read the contracts they sign," she says. "And make sure you get a contractor who's an expert at what you need done. You don't want your house to be a guinea pig."

Next, be sure to compare apples with apples. Consider offering your top candidate a flat fee to spell out each step and material so that others can bid on the same thing. "Generally, materials account for 40 percent of the total cost, the rest covers overhead and the profit margin, which is typically 15 to 20 percent," says Tom Silva. And, yes, says Steve Miller, owner of HomeProHub, a home-improvement consulting firm in San Jose, California, it's okay to negotiate. He recommends doing it by e-mail, which puts everything in writing and helps conquer fear of haggling. Even top pros have dry spells and may lower a bid to keep crew members busy, he says. Keep one eye on the calendar—winter months are often slow—and be flexible. "Life happens to pros, too," he explains. "Divorces, taking kids off to college. So stay in contact, and later, if he loses a job, he can pull up your e-mail."

6 Learn how to break up and make up

Some relationships fall apart despite everyone's best intentions, so establish a graceful way to exit if need be. Lupberger points to a provision hammered out by a fellow contractor that allows clients—and their pros—to bow out with seven days' notice. Consider adding an incentive clause, too. Homeowners often grumble when they can't penalize a contractor who finishes weeks—sometime months—after the projected due date. But a better idea is to dangle an award if he beats the clock. "I love that," says Thompson, who was once gifted with a $5,000 bonus on a big project. "That is complete fire under a contractor's butt."

7 Do some of the grunt work

As Zembruski learned during the redo of his house, remodeling pros are just like office workers: There are aspects of the job that they don't love. Demolition can be dirty, boring work, do it yourself and you'll notice a more energetic spring in your GC's step. Then there's the unpleasant business of getting down on one's hands and knees in a small place. "Our crawl space is about 3 feet high," Zembruski says of the area under his kitchen. "It's dark in there, and there are spiders and bugs." So before he called in his electrician, he roughed out the wiring down below. As for his much-in-demand plumber, "he doesn't want to be in the sink cabinet knocking over the soap—he's a big guy!" says Zembruski, who clears the way before he picks up the phone. One time he took apart a leaky faucet before the plumber got there. In return, the guy did him the ultimate favor: making his house the first stop on a very busy day.

WHILE YOU'RE AT IT...

Seven requests you should never make and seven you can—and should

What you can't ask for

1_ I ran out of time. Can you move all this stuff before you paint?

2_ I have to run some errands. Could you keep an eye on the kids?

3_ Since you're going out anyway, would you mind walking the dog?

4_ Darn—my computer just crashed! Can you fix it?

5_ FedEx is coming by to pick up this envelope. Could you make sure to be here?

6_ I just blew another fuse. Mind replacing it? [If he's a plumber.]

7_ The drain's backed up again. Could you fix it? [If he's an electrician.]

What you can ask for

1_ Could you replace the pressure-balance valve in the shower? Older baths often lack this safety feature, which keeps the showerhead from scalding when cold water is drawn elsewhere in the house. A plumber who's already on the job should be willing to make this fix. "Expect to pay for the valve itself, of course," says architect Darren Hegelsen, who specializes in older-house redos in the Amagansett, New York, area.

2_ Could you take a look at the insulation? If your contractor is opening up walls anyway, it's okay to ask him to patch holes in the insulation, says Andrew Black, a general contractor in Columbus, Wisconsin. Expect to pay for time and materials.

3_ Could you touch this up? If a painter is on the job already, it's fine to ask for free touch-ups in other rooms, says Kara O'Brien, a general contractor in Atlanta. "Just don't ask for anything larger than a handkerchief."

4_ Could you upgrade the wiring in another room? An electrician who is already working in the house may offer a deal to do work in other rooms, especially if he doesn't have to open the walls himself, says Black.

5_ Could you replace the smoke and CO detectors? An electrician who is already on the job may be willing to waive the fee for replacing or augmenting smoke and carbon-monoxide detectors. Read up ahead of time on where they should go.

6_ Could you flag any weak framing? If crawl members are already poking into the walls and floors, it's okay to ask them to watch for signs of rotting wood. You'll be charged for time and materials to replace it, but meanwhile a pro has helped prevent more expensive fixes down the road.

7_ Could you advise me on another project? Tradesmen are often a font of free design advice, and that's a good thing. Prompted by a client's query, O'Brien once volunteered a tip for giving exposed brick a faux-aged look (scrub it down with muriatic acid). —NATALIE RODRIGUEZ

8 Write down house rules, a payment schedule, and everything else

Don't expect the rest of the world to know how you feel about work boots tromping around in your pristine bath. Draw up an agreement about who will be in the house and when, and which areas crew members should feel free to use. Spell out the timing of payments, keeping in mind that many pros have cash-flow issues. As always, communication is key. Mary Fallon, who recently remodeled the kitchen in her San Jose home, says she used her skills as a former reporter to stay on top of the project and keep all her subs well informed. "They'd all get the schedule, and that way there was more camaraderie."

Ideally, says Miller, of HomeProHub, on a big job your pro should spell out every step, expense, and setback on a dedicated website that's accessible to all, using snapshots and software, such as Co-Construct, designed to manage projects. But even if your pro prefers pencil and paper over keyboard, documentation is essential. Mysterious expenses often lead to distrust, says Miller, "and sharing information with homeowners really eliminates this problem." Lynn McBride, who has survived—and blogged about—home renovations in spots as far-flung as Charleston, South Carolina, and Balleure, France, advises using the specs in the bid as a checklist. "I used to track every detail in a three-ring notebook," she says. "Today, I'd stick it on my iPad."

9 Make this love affair last

No matter how important you think you are, do yourself a favor and treat your pro like an equal, says Thompson. "I've worked for all kinds of people," he adds, "and the ones I go back to know how to look across the table at you and not down at you." Lupberger still recalls a client who came by the work site a couple of times a week to share coffee and chitchat. Says this hardened pro, "I'm sure she got extra things done off the books."

CLIENTS FROM HELL

A field guide

Hissy fits, missed deadlines, bad manners—yes, we're talking about the homeowners

BY **NATALIE RODRIGUEZ**

People love to trade tales about contractors who charge too much, do too little, or even disappear before the job is done. But it turns out there are two sides to this relationship. You didn't know? Well, maybe you're already the kind of classy homeowner who can melt a heart hardened by years of working inside other people's homes. For those who may be newer to the tradesman-client relationship, meet the six most dreaded homeowner personality types in the business. All are based on real-life stories shared by pros who have seen it all and hope never to see these types again. If you recognize yourself, don't panic. We've included suggestions on how to redeem your reputation. Now all you need is to get one of your favorite pros to return your phone calls.

The Hysteric

IDENTIFYING TRAIT: Childlike inability to see the bigger picture

Pros hate having to break in a novice, especially one as touchy as a feral cat. "I had a homeowner call me in tears because my crew was wrecking her house," says Steve Miller, a former contractor who helps match homeowners with pros in San Jose, California. "I rushed over to check it out. Then I had to try to calmly explain to her as she continued crying that everything was going fine. Yes, the home was in shambles—it's called demolition. If rough stuff also makes you nuts, keep in mind that Rome wasn't built in a day. First they had to clear some space. Still hate to watch? Hide out at Starbucks.

The Compulsive Communicator

IDENTIFYING TRAIT: Eyes always locked on a small electronic device

Communication is a good idea, up to a point. "I had a homeowner who called, e-mailed, and texted me all day long," says one general contractor who requested anonymity. "If I didn't respond right away, I'd get a call, an e-mail, or a text about not responding. It became unbearable." Some GCs also have a hard time knowing what qualifies as an emergency. "Being upset with a paint color is not an emergency," pro David Lupberger says calmly. To avoid pounding your pro with hailstones, send one note at day's end—an evening squall, so to speak.

The Chore Abuser

IDENTIFYING TRAIT: Blind to the expression on a fellow human's face

Reva Kussmaul, author of *Remodel 411: Secrets to a Successful Remodeling Relationship*, says that as a contractor she once arrived at a work site to find the homeowner packing 12 huge boxes. "She said, 'Oh, I want your guys to take these out to the porch for the UPS guy.' Then she asked me to have them rush her patio furniture inside if it started raining. I mean, come on!" Experiences like this compelled Kussmaul to hang out a shingle as a remodeling coach. She encourages homeowners to treat remodeling pros like other pros—surgeons, say.

The Perfectionist

IDENTIFYING TRAIT: Projects feelings of inadequacy onto others

Of course you deserve superb workmanship and in a timely manner. But whether it's delivery of the new tub before noon or the envisioned placement of a switch plate, nothing will ever be perfectly perfect. "We explained that custom cabinetry could never look like an airbrushed photo in a catalog," one source says of a prickly client. "It is handcrafted, after all." But she had the cabinets remade—twice. If you suspect that you, too, qualify as "tightly wound," start with a realistic calendar—your pro can help—and be glad if the tub arrives before he's off to his next job.

The Amateur Project Manager

IDENTIFYING TRAIT: Believes he or she was a pro in a previous life

Kussmaul had a client who thought that "since he organized a carpool, he could act as project manager," she recalls. "But he didn't order enough paint, and since it was a custom color, we had to stop the job for half a day. He wasn't happy when I charged him for the time." Eric Thompson, a GC in Hampton Bays, New York, tells amateur purchasing agents, "Oh, excellent—now you can sort through the warped 2×4s and sit on hold with customer service when the faucet breaks—and you can't find the serial number!"

The Meddler

IDENTIFYING TRAIT: Uses his outside voice even when he's in your face

The Meddler is always on the job, which is no help at all. "My car mechanic doesn't want me under the hood with him," says Kussmaul. "Well, my guys don't want someone under the ladder when they're putting up drywall." Another GC, who requested anonymity, recalls a homeowner who "yelled about where we parked our trucks, yelled about the amount of time it was taking, yelled about the dust, and—naturally—yelled about how loud our tools were." If you are the kind of client who gets underfoot, try using this quality time to be nice: You may be rewarded just for being polite.

ALL ABOUT

Pellet stoves

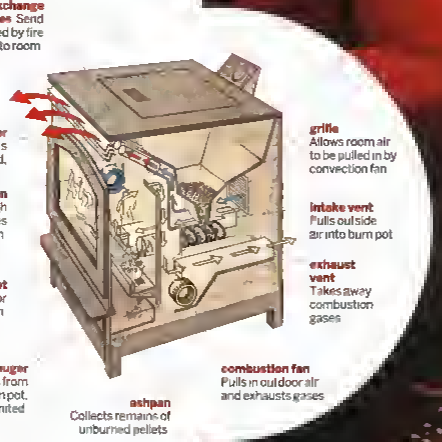
These high-efficiency heaters let you turn down the household thermostat while warming your rooms, providing ambience, and reducing your energy bills

By John Morell

In colder climates, heating accounts for about one-third of a homeowner's annual utility bill, which is why many are seeking thriftier ways to stay toasty. Freestanding pellet stoves and inserts that fit inside an existing fireplace are an increasingly popular solution. They look like traditional woodstoves but operate more like a modern furnace. You need only fill the stove's hopper with pellets made from compacted sawdust, set its thermostat, sit back, and get cozy. A mechanical auger deposits the pellets into a burn pot, where they are incinerated at such a high temperature that they create no vent-clogging creosote and very little ash or emissions, which keeps both indoor and outdoor air cleaner. The best part is that they are about twice as efficient at warming your home as older woodstoves that have not been certified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and are vastly more efficient than fireplaces.

Depending on your home's size and layout, a pellet stove could supplement the current heating system or be used as the sole source. And, despite its workhorse reputation, pellet stoves come in a variety of designs to complement any interior style. Read on for *This Old House*'s expert advice on buying, installing, and firing up one of these energy-wise heaters.

How they work Pellets are automatically fed from a storage hopper into a burn pot, creating a constant flame that needs no tending.


heat-exchange tubes Send air heated by fire into room
hopper Stores pellets to be burned.
convection fan Circulates air through heat-exchange tubes and into room
burn pot Holds pellets for combustion
auger Feeds pellets from hopper to burn pot, where they are ignited
ashpan Collects remains of unburned pellets
combustion fan Pulls in outdoor air and exhausts gases
grille Allows room air to be pulled in by convection fan
intake vent Pulls outside air into burn pot
exhaust vent Takes away combustion gases

Pellet stoves heat your home much like a furnace does while also providing a flame to gather around. Shown: Lopi AGP, $3,000, lopistoves.com

VITALS

What do they cost?
About $1,000 to $5,000 for a pellet stove or an insert, depending on style, size, and heat output, plus another $300 or so for the vent pipe or chimney liner.

DIY or hire a pro?
Unless you're comfortable cutting holes in your house for the venting, leave installation to the pros. Pipes can run horizontally out an exterior wall, vertically through the roof, or up the chimney if adding an insert. Expect to pay $250 to $1,000, depending on the complexity of the job.

How much cleanup?
Pellet stoves create a tiny fraction of the ash produced by an older wood-burning stove or fireplace, so cleaning is much less frequent. If used daily, empty the ashpan once a week.

Are there government incentives to buy them?
Several states offer property- or income-tax rebates; some, such as New York, don't charge sales tax on pellets. Check with your state's department of energy for details.

How they stack up against woodstoves

The biggest difference between a pellet stove and its main competitor, a woodstove, is that inside the pellet stove is a high-tech device with a circuit board, a thermostat, and fans—all of which work together to heat your space efficiently. Here are the other key differences between the two.

	> Pellet	> Wood
Efficiency	Sixty to 80 percent of fuel is converted to heat for your home.	Thirty to 80 percent (high end is for EPA-certified stoves made after 1990).
Maintenance	> High-quality pellets limit ashpan cleaning to once a week or less > Scrape the burn pot weekly to remove combustion residue and unburned pellets. > Clean and inspect vents at the outset of heating season.	> Remove ash every one to three days. > Clean the chimney and inspect the stove and the door gasket at outset of heating season.
Venting options	Very little smoke, exhaust is drafted outside with a fan through a horizontal or vertical vent pipe.	A passive system requiring a vertical chimney so that smoke can rise and flow outside.
Fuel availability	Find 40-pound bags of pellets at home centers and hardware and grocery stores in cold climates. Dealers will also deliver pellets by the ton.	You may be able to harvest your own hardwood, but it must be properly seasoned. It's also sold by the bundle at stores or by the cord from tree-care pros.
Fuel storage	Bags of pellets should be kept indoors to guard against moisture infiltration.	Wood can be stacked outside under cover and away from the house to prevent damage from termites.

What is a pellet?

It's a small pill made of wood waste, mostly sawdust. Pellets have a low moisture content, 5 to 10 percent, compared with 20 percent for seasoned firewood. In some regions, you may find pellets made of switchgrass or cornstalks. Corn kernels can also be used in lieu of pellets.

WHAT SIZE STOVE TO BUY

Performance is affected by your home's layout, insulation, and regional climate, but generally 5 000 Btus of fire power will heat 200 square feet. For a precise match for your space, have a dealer visit your home and recommend a model. Just keep in mind that the warmth from your stove will be concentrated in rooms closest to where it's installed. If used for supplemental heat, one trick is to put the stove near a furnace return vent and run the furnace fan to circulate warmed air throughout your home. A ceiling fan with its blades turning in reverse can also help distribute warmed air.

Time to recoup cost

As the sole heater for a 2,000-square-foot home in a cold climate, expect to spend $3,000 to buy and install the new stove, plus $980 for four tons of pellets. The time it takes for the stove to pay itself off depends on your current heating fuel.
→ OIL: Runs $1,857 per winter, or $877 more than pellets. You can break even in about four years.
→ ELECTRICITY: Costs about $2 306 a year, or $1,326 more than pellets. Expect a return on your investment in year three.
→ NATURAL GAS: This fuel is cheaper, at $623 annually, but if you're currently using a fireplace or an older woodstove for supplementary heat, you will save in the long run by switching to pellets.

Pellet-stove styles

You can get both freestanding stoves and inserts for an existing fireplace to complement both traditional and contemporary interior spaces. Here are some of our favorites.

Lopi Leyden This vintage-look stove has a large firebox relative to its medium-size frame. The ashpan is fitted with drawer glides to ease cleanup. $3 700 for this 45 000-Btu model in matte black only; lopistoves.com

Wittus Suite Air When connected to HVAC ducts, the stove's built-in fan directs warm air to other rooms in the house. Comes with a remote control. $5 250 for this 40 000 Btu model in red, white, or yellow; wittus.com

HearthStone Manchester This souped-up stove has a large glass door, a 60-pound hopper capacity, and automatic cleaning cycles that minimize upkeep. $4 600 for this 51,000 Btu model in gloss brown or $4,300 in gloss black; hearthstonestoves.com

Thelin Gnome This diminutive 34-inch heater resembles an old potbellied woodstove. Its size and 27 000 Btu output make it ideal for small spaces. Starts at $2 490 in matte black, gloss black, or gloss cream; thelinco.com

Harman Accentra The 40 000-Btu stove has a 50-pound hopper capacity and an ashpan large enough to burn a ton of pellets before it needs to be emptied. $3 600, in matte black or gloss brown; harmanstoves.com

Enviro Empress The cast-iron insert, which extends only 9 inches into the hearth, has a 55-pound hopper capacity and a classical arched surround. $2 750 for this 34 000-Btu model, in gloss black, white, or brown; enviro.com

Lennox Bella The unit has an LCD panel to monitor the stove's operation and a whisper-quiet combustion fan and auger motor. $4,300 for this 43 000 Btu model, in gloss black or brown; lennoxhearthproducts.com

PHOTOS: (OPPOSITE PAGE, "WOOD") DANIYA MELNIKOVA/STOCKPHOTO (TOP RIGHT) ANTHONY TIEULI (BOTTOM) JUMA WIRE SERVICE/ALAMY

Putting in your stove

An experienced pellet stove dealer can alleviate installation headaches such as figuring out the best venting routes and where to place the stove so that its heat reaches the most rooms. Here are some other factors to consider before hooking up a pellet stove.

distance from walls
Freestanding pellet stoves, such as this Harman XXV model, have a minimal footprint in a room. They can typically be placed 1 to 3 inches from the back wall and 6 to 7 inches from sidewalls.

safe clearances
Because of the heat they generate, pellet stoves should be at least 36 inches from furniture and draperies and placed out of the main foot traffic areas, especially in households with small children.

venting
The exhaust pipe, which can go straight out an exterior wall or up through the roof or chimney, must be tightly sealed to prevent flue gases from entering the home. A second intake line provides outside air for combustion.

power supply
Almost all pellet stoves require a nearby outlet to run the fans, thermostat, and circuit board. If the stove is your sole heater, consider adding a battery backup (about $300) in case your electricity goes out.

floor protection
Pellet stoves must rest on a noncombustible surface, such as stone or ceramic tile, to guard against errant embers. A pad should extend 6 inches beyond the door.

Turn your fireplace into a pellet stove

A traditional fireplace looks great, but it's a poor heat generator. Most of the flame's warmth, plus warmed air from the rest of your house, goes right up the chimney.

To transform your hearth into an efficient heater, you can fit the firebox with a pellet-stove insert, such as the Harman P35i model shown at left. A dealer can help you find a unit and a metal surround to best fit your hearth's dimensions. But because a metal liner must be fitted inside the chimney for ventilation, installation is best left to a chimney specialist. This work may also need to be approved by a municipal inspector before the stove can be operated.

PHOTOS: (TOP) INSIGHT; PAGE 87: (LOG SET) REMOTE CONTROL; SCUTTLE; BAG OF PELLETS) © CHASE CHRISTMORE INC./DIGITAL STUDIO

Pellet FAQs

TOH deciphers the label on a bag of pellets to help you get the best-burning fuel

The Pellet Fuels Institute has two grades for pellets: premium, which is usually made of only wood, and standard, which contains some bark. Premium pellets are marginally more expensive than standard—about $5.50 for a 40-pound bag—but they produce less ash. Another indicator of quality is the amount of fines, or dust, at the bottom of the bag; there should be less than 0.5 percent, which works out to half a cup. Any more dust can create fused ash chunks, called clinkers, that block airflow into the stove. The last variable is sodium content; pellets should have fewer than 300 parts per million (ppm) to ensure an efficient burn.

The ear factor

Hearing a stove in action on the dealer's floor is just as important as seeing one. If the whir of the fans or the hum of the auger motor bothers you, find another model.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT?
We'll feature the most popular topics in these pages in July's reader-created issue. Post ideas at thisoldhouse.com/bonus

Finishing touches

You don't need tools to tend the fire, but a few choice accessories can improve the look and function of your pellet stove —KATELIN HILL

log set
Get the look of a wood-burning fire by arranging ceramic logs around the pellet burn pot. These logs are from Lopi, but most other stove manufacturers design sets for their units, too. $84, lopistoves.com

steamer
Give the air much-needed moisture with a steamer pot. These lattice-style cast-iron ones with a red enamel finish also add a pop of color to your stove. $40 (small) and $60 (large), plowhearth.com

remote control
When paired with a transmitter that monitors stove and room temperatures, a remote lets you adjust heat output from your armchair. This model works only with Napoleon stoves, but most manufacturers offer a similar setup. $139; napoleonfireplaces.com

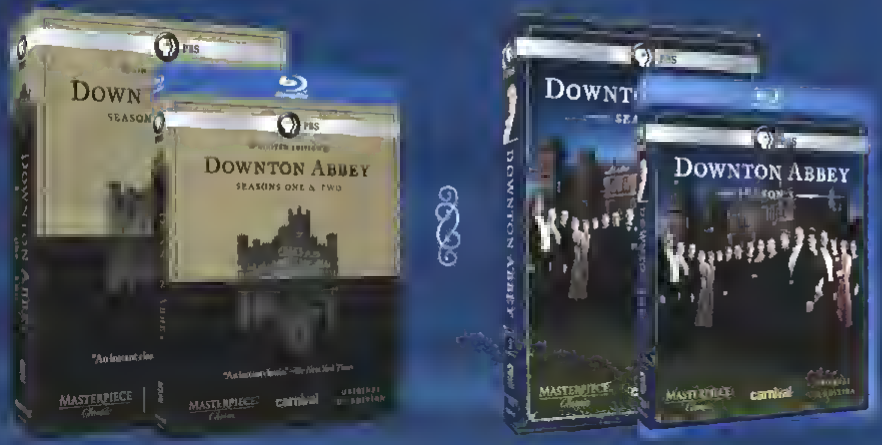
prefab pad
Build your own or choose from a variety of pre-cast slabs in a material and pattern to suit your style. The one with a running bond design, shown, is $24 [illegible]

scuttle
Far more charming than a plastic bag beside your stove, these old-timey coal scuttles have a spout and double handles that make it a cinch to pour pellets into the hopper. $39 for galvanized steel and $34 for copper plate, woodlanddirect.com

"...seductive, because it's so well done" -The Guardian (UK)

"...romance, intrigue and sumptuous costumes..." -The Express (UK)

DOWNTON ABBEY



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askthisoldhouse

inside | LOOSE DRAWER FRONT | CABINET CROWN | COMBO SQUARES | MORE

41 tips, tricks, and answers to your home-improvement questions

Q I need to remove some bricks to get at a drainpipe. How can I make sure I'm able to reuse them?

– MIKE ALLEN SEGUIN TEXAS

A For this sort of small job, the best way to extricate bricks is to chip out the mortar around them with a cold chisel like the antique ones below. Made of forged steel and then tempered at the tip, these tools can also score stone, crack concrete, and cut steel with equal facility. Use a cold chisel with a blade slightly narrower than the joint, press it against the mortar, and whack it with a hand sledge. And please wear eye and ear protection. –THE EDITORS

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEVI BROWN

→ Our cast of veteran experts

TOM SILVA
General Contractor

NORM ABRAM
Master Carpenter

RICHARD TRETHEWEY
Plumbing and Heating Expert

ROGER COOK
Landscape Contractor

KEVIN O'CONNOR
Host

Q One of my kitchen drawer fronts keeps coming loose. I plugged the screw holes with wood putty, but it didn't really help. Is there a way to fix it?

—BARBARA FRIEDMAN PROVIDENCE R I

When a drawer front comes loose, Norm Abram refastens it with deck screws, which hold better than standard wood screws

Norm Abram replies: Yes, and with applied drawer fronts like yours, the fix is fairly easy. They're simply screwed on from inside the drawer box. That's true even for drawers with metal sides and melamine ends, like the one I'm working on at left. For either one, use the following repair method.

Drill new pilot holes through the drawer box and about two thirds of the way into the front. Locate them as close as possible to the sides of the box, and countersink the holes to bury the screwheads. To keep the front aligned while drilling the holes, tack it to the drawer box with a few spots of hot-melt glue.

Before you reattach the front, enlarge the new holes in the drawer box slightly. That frees the screws to cinch the front as tight as possible against the box. Use four deck screws to secure small drawer fronts and six on large drawer fronts.

Q BAD SPOT FOR BATHROOM EXHAUST

The duct for my bathroom fan ends just under the ridge cap. It doesn't go through the roof. Is this an acceptable way to vent a bathroom?

—JOHN BURKE ARLINGTON VA

Richard Trethewey replies: In a word, no. That sneaky shortcut is not approved by the 2012 International Residential Code (IRC), which serves as a model for most residential building codes in the United States. According to the IRC, "Exhaust air from bathrooms and toilet rooms shall not discharge into an attic, crawl space, or other areas inside the building."

There are good reasons for the code to be so adamant on this point. Pumping heat and humidity into an attic can foster mold, rot, and, in snowy climates, ice dams. You should reroute the duct so that it exhausts to the outside through an exhaust vent cap on a sidewall, a gable wall, or the roof. Venting through the roof is my least favorite option because of the risk of water leaks, but sometimes it's the only route available.

GOT ANSWERS? If you have a trick that would impress Norm—or any of the guys—share it with us for a chance to be included in the July reader-created issue. Post ideas at thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH

PHOTOS, (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): ANTHONY T. EULISS; ANTHONY T. EULISS; ANTHONY T. EULISS;

Scott Caron replies: You definitely should be concerned. While it's perfectly normal for a dimmer switch to get warm, it should never get hot, which is a sure sign that you have an undersized dimmer. At best, it could fail; at worst, it could cause a fire.

To remedy the situation, remove the switch plate and look at the switch's body. A wattage rating is usually stamped right on the front, but if it's not, cut the power to the switch and pull it out. You'll find the rating stamped on the side. If your dimmer is rated for 600 watts, as standard dimmers are, it can't handle the 720 watts those bulbs draw when turned up all the way. That would explain why the switch gets so toasty.

There are two easy ways to fix this problem. Either replace the dimmer with one that has a higher wattage rating—typically 1,000 watts—or replace the bulbs with lower-watt, dimmable CFLs or LEDs. Then your switch should cool down to normal.

One last thing: If you choose to go with CFLs or LEDs and you want them to dim as smoothly as your incandescents, you'll need a dimmer switch like Lutron's C-L dimmer (lutron.com), which is compatible with the electronics in these bulbs.

Scott Caron is a master electrician who has appeared in a number of Ask This Old House *television episodes.*

send your questions to askthisoldhouse

go to: thisoldhouse.com/esktoh **or write to:** Ask This Old House, This Old House magazine, 135 West 50th Street, New York, NY 10020

Include a complete address and daytime phone number. Published questions will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media. We regret that, because of the volume of mail received, we're unable to reply to unpublished questions.

Here's a clever way to add crown to cabinets. Mount the molding on a frame and install it as a single unit.

Q I want to install crown molding on my kitchen cabinets. What's the best way to go about it? —BRIAN SPEARS, ST. LOUIS

Craig Tolmie of Tide Mill Restoration replies: A lot of upper kitchen cabinets these days don't have enough material above the doors on which to mount crown molding. To get around that shortcoming, I build a hardwood frame that sits on top of the cabinets and use it as a base for fastening the crown.

Using a frame allows me to do the detail work on a bench—much easier than from a ladder—and I can attach the crown from the back side, so there are no nail holes to fill. Once the frame and crown are attached, you install the whole assembly in one go.

If the ceiling isn't level, as was the case here, then you have two options above the crown: Leave a gap or scribe-fit a filler strip that follows the contours of the ceiling. Whatever you do, avoid scribing the crown itself or leaving a small gap of ½ inch or less. Either one will draw attention to the ceiling's unevenness and undermine all your careful work with the molding.

more info

For a list of the tools and materials used on this project, go to thisoldhouse.com/bonus

Cost: $1 to $2 per linear foot for the 1×4 poplar in this frame; $12 per foot for the 8-inch painted maple crown molding

Time: One day to do; 16 feet of upper cabinets

Difficulty: Moderate. Must know how to cut tight miters.

PHOTOS: WENDELL T. WEBBER (7)

STEP-BY-STEP Install kitchen-cabinet crown molding

1_ Make the frame

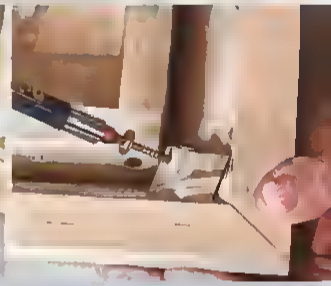
Measure each leg of the cabinets' run from wall to wall. Cut and screw together an L-shaped 1×4 frame that follows the cabinets' top edges, but leave each end ½ inch shy of the wall. Butt and overlap the corners and countersink the screws. Screw reinforcing blocks to the back of the frame, as shown, then check to make sure it sits flush with the cabinets' faces.

2_ Cut and attach the crown

Take the frame back to the workbench and shim it up by ½ inch to create a slight overhang for the crown. Miter and trim the crown to match the cabinets' run—the crown's ends will extend past the frame's ends by ½ inch. Rest the crown's bottom edge on the bench, glue the joints, and fasten the frame to the crown's back side, as shown, using 1¼-inch screws.

3_ Reinforce the outside miters

To prevent the outside miters from coming open, glue and screw small reinforcing blocks to the backs of the crown at each joint. In this case, the faces of each block are cut at a 22½-degree angle so that it sits flat against the moldings' sloped backs. To pull each side of the joint together, offset two screws and drive them through the block perpendicular to each other.



4_ Mount the assembly

With a helper, lift the finished assembly into place atop the cabinets. Check that the crown's overhanging bottom lip—created by shimming the frame in Step 2—fits tightly against the cabinets' faces and doesn't interfere with the doors. Also make sure that the joints are tight and both ends are snug against the wall.

5_ Attach it to the cabinets

Drive 2½-inch screws up through the cabinets' top panels and into the bottom of the L-shaped frame. Place them close behind the cabinets' face frames. If there's a gap of an inch or more between the crown and the ceiling, you're finished with the install. For gaps narrower than 1 inch, find a strip wide enough to fill the widest gap and proceed to Step 6.

6_ Scribe-fit the filler strips

For each run, have a helper hold the strip level and touching the ceiling's lowest point. Set a compass to the widest gap and scribe the ceiling contour on the strip, as shown. Trim the strip with a jigsaw, check the fit, and miter-cut the ends to length. Take the frame down and glue and nail the strips to the top edge of the crown. Reinstall the assembly and caulk it along the ceiling.

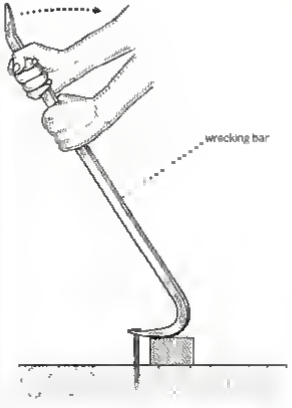
FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 98

Norm's tricks of the trade

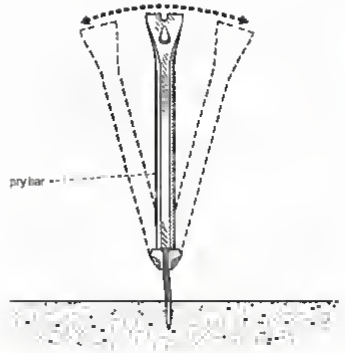
Q I can't budge the masonry nails anchoring the 2×4 sleepers to the concrete slab in my basement. I even tried cutting them off with an angle grinder, with no luck. Is there a better way?

—MIKE HALE, APPLETON, WIS.

A Masonry nails are made of difficult-to-cut hardened steel, and their spiral-fluted shafts make them stubborn to pull out. To get at them, split the sleepers with a chisel and pry off the splintered pieces. With the nails exposed, the easiest way to get rid of them is with a 36-inch wrecking bar as described in Plan A, at right. If that doesn't work, move on to Plan B. Whichever method you go with, be sure to wear safety glasses.



PLAN A Slip a scrap of wood under the wrecking bar's elbow to lift the claw up underneath the nailhead, then pull back on the end of the bar. A small chunk of concrete may come out with the nail, but any divots can easily be filled with nonshrink grout.



PLAN B If the wrecking bar fails to budge a stubborn nail, the quickest way to get it out is to hook the claws of a hammer or a pry bar under the nailhead, then bend it side to side until the shaft breaks off at or below the surface of the concrete. As a last resort, use a small cold chisel to chip away the concrete around the nail, then extract the entire nail using the wrecking bar, as shown in Plan A.

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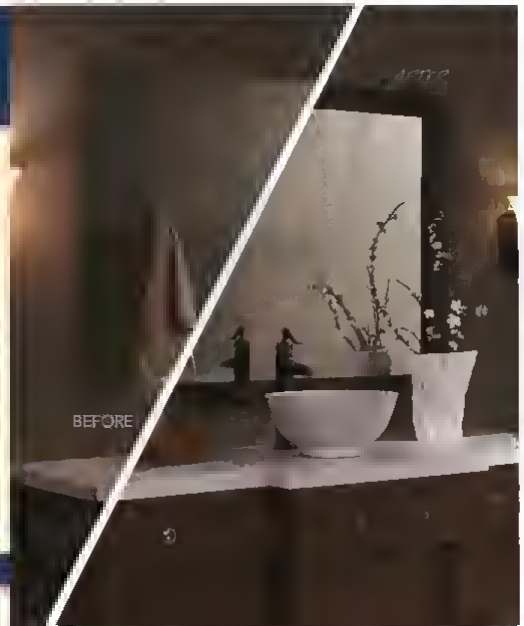

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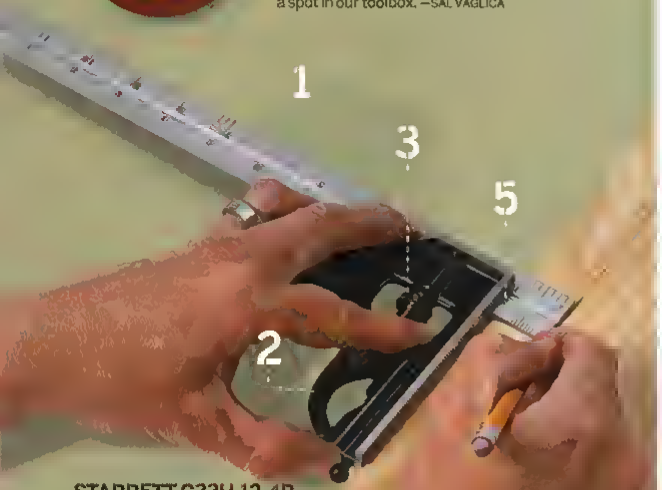
Get square

Look past its gangly appearance and meet the most versatile layout tool going the combination square. It'll mark lines, measure thickness, check for square, and much more. From heirloom-quality to bargain-bin, here are the five that deserve a spot in our toolbox. —SAL VAGLICA



STARRETT C33H-12-4R

$105, starrett.com

Nice to see that the company that introduced the combo square in 1877 still makes one of the best. The forged and hardened steel head is paired with a blade etched with gradations filled with paint. A satin finish renders them easy to read even under the glare of your shop light.

what to look for

1_A blade with easy-to-read markings.
2_A pleasantly hefty square head, preferably cast iron or forged steel.
3_A knurled adjustment knob to lock or loosen the blade.
4_A scratch awl at least 1 inch long that fits snugly into the head.
5_Nicely machined edges free of pitting or paint.

KNOW TOOLS? Share your tips with us for a chance to appear in July's reader-created issue. Post suggestions at thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH

JOHNSON 440

$28.75, johnsonlevel.com

At roughly one-quarter the price of an heirloom-quality combo square, this cast-iron workhorse with a nonreflective finish is the very best of the home-center fare. We like the threaded awl and easy-to-read green leveling vial, but wish the sides of the head were better machined. It could also use a more prominent adjustment knob.

EMPIRE E255

$7.97, empirelevel.com

This 6-inch-long pocketable square is easier to use for checking small parts or setting router-bit heights. The bright blue vial is a snap to read. Twist the chunky knob to loosen the square lock bolt, which can't spin freely, and easily adjust the blade. The chamfered edges on the head make it comfortable to hold.

SWANSON SPEEDLITE TC131

$6.59, swansontoolco.com

Consider this the equivalent of a beater chisel—except with some nice touches—like a knurled brass knob—you wouldn't expect to find on a sub-$7 tool. The readable blade and large vial are nice touches. And even though the head is plastic, it comes with a threaded awl that rests proud of the head—easy to grab.

LAGESSE LASQUARE LAS-12S

$35.95, lagesseproducts.com

At 2 inches wide, the aluminum head of this square won't tip when you're marking pipes and tubing. It's also great for trueing a table-saw blade or checking an inside corner for square. That said, this isn't the choice for marking 1× or other thin stock, since you'd have to prop up the material to meet the blade.

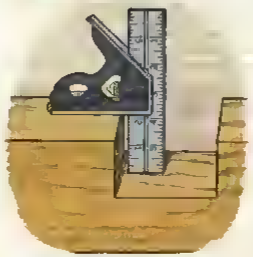
Check it for true

With a tool prized for its accuracy, it's worth checking every now and then to make sure yours is true. Extend the blade as far as possible, grooved side up, through the 90-degree face of the head and hook the square against the straight edge of a board. Scribe a line along the blade. Now flip the tool over, groove down, and line up the same edge of the blade with your mark. If they're parallel, the tool is square. If not, it needs to be repaired or replaced.

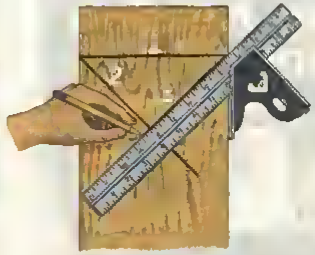
PHOTOS: WENDELL T. WEBBER. ILLUSTRATIONS: GREGORY NEMEC

Norm's techniques: Think outside the square

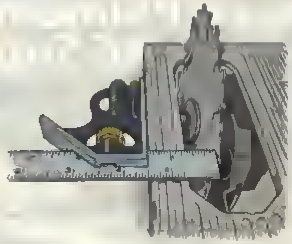
TOH master carpenter Norm Abram's tips to get the most out of your go-to layout tool



Mark end check notches. Set the blade to the notch's depth. Hug the square to the board and, holding a pencil against the end of the blade (see photo opposite page), drag both along the board to mark the base of the notch. Use the blade's long edges to mark the width. To check the depth of your cuts, position the square as shown, bottom out the blade, tighten the knob, and read the marking.



Find the centerline. 1. Draw a line across the board 90 degrees to both edges. **2.** Use the 45-degree face to draw a line from the point where the 90-degree line meets an edge of the board. **3.** Flip the square over to the board's other edge and draw another diagonal, as shown, from the opposite end of the 90-degree line. Where the diagonals intersect is the centerline.



Cut sheet goods accurately. Unplug your circular saw or remove its battery and flip it upside down. Place the square's 90-degree face against the narrow edge of the shoe and extend the square's blade until it touches one tooth, as shown; then tighten the knob. Read the marking and clamp a straightedge at that distance from your cutline on the keeper side. Cut away.

directory { January/February 2013 }

Cover: *For information see listing for "Before + After Kitchen."*

Home Solutions *(pp. 17–23)* **Nicer deicers** *Thanks to* Russ Alger, Institute for Snow Research, Michigan Technological University; mtukrc.org; Kathleen Schaefer and Robert Edstrom, Minnesota Department of Transportation, dot.state.mn.us.

Before + After Kitchen: From bare-bones to cottage-charming *(pp. 25–27)* **Architect:** Erica Broberg Smith, East Hampton, NY; ericabrobergarchitect.com. **Cabinets:** Smith River Kitchens, East Hampton, NY; smithriverkitchens.com. **Windows:** Andersen; andersenwindows.com. **Pulls, knobs, and hinges:** Kraft Hardware; kraft hardware.com. **Range and fridge:** Wolf and Sub-Zero; subzero-wolf.com. **Microwave:** Dacor; dacor.com. **Dishwasher:** Miele; mieleusa.com. **Floor stain:** Minwax Provincial; minwax.com. **Sink:** Waterworks; waterworks.com. **Faucet:** Rohl; rohlhome.com.

Before + After Bath: Adding light, no windows needed *(pp. 29–30)* **Designer:** Beth Bynon Designs, Oceanside, CA; bethbynon.com. **Lighting:** Bistro Sconce; Restoration Hardware; restorationhardware.com. **Medicine cabinet, sink, faucet, and toilet:** #74101-00-NA, #72030-00-0, and #22730-00-AD, For Town, and #70133-CP-0, Fer Country, by Michael S. Smith; kallista.com. **Tile:** Classica White 3 by-6 Field Tile (shower) and Tima Square Black 12 by 12 (border), EMS and CTS SXG-1202, and Glossy White 1½ by 3½ (hex); Eurosol; europeansb.com. **Wall paint:** Nigerian Peony; Ralph Lauren; ralphlaurenhome.com.

Shop Smarter: So can I keep my favorite frying pan? *(p. 36)* *Thanks to* Steve Shainkopf, Yale Appliance + Lighting; yaleappliance.com. Malte Peters, Thermador; thermador.com. Paul Bristow, GE Appliances; geappliances.com.

Budget Redo: Fireplace face-lift for just $87 *(p. 42)* **Homeowners blog:** The Lettered Cottage; theletteredcottage.net

Weekend Remodel: Build a columned room divider *(pp. 57–61)* **Designer/builder:** Christopher Berdal Parnt, Brooklyn, NY; 347-742-6463; permitstudio.com. **Lumber:** Pelham Lumber, Pelham, NY; pelhamlumber.com

Updating a Cozy Craftsman *(pp. 62–69)* **Designer:** Aaron Cover. Foyer, living room, and dining room. **Fireplace surround:** Dallile; dallile.com. **Light fixtures:** North Park Family; Progress Lighting; progresslighting.com. **Blinds:** Bali; bali blinds.com. Kitchen. **Blinds:** Levolor; levolor.com. **Tile:** Brazil Gray Slate (floor) and Folie Two in Glacier Ice (backsplash); dalltile.com. **Fridge:** Sub-Zero; subzero-wolf.com. **Cooktop:** GE Monogram; monogram.com. **Microwave and oven:** KitchenAid; kitchenaid.com. **Vent hood:** Cavaliere; cavalierehoods.com. **Sink:** Ticor; ticorsinks.com. **Pendant lights:** George Kovacs; minka.com. **Cabinet hardware:** Dalton Collection; Restoration Hardware; restorationhardware.com. **Stools:** Turner Counter Barstool; Crate & Barrel; crateandbarrel.com. **Master bath. Sinks and faucets:** Purist Collection; Kohler; kohler.com. **Shower fixtures:** WaterTile; kohler.com. **Toilet:** Tresham; kohler.com. **Tub:** Porcher; porcher.us.com. **Heated towel rack, radiant floor, and heated mirrors:** Warm Your Floor; warmyourfloor.com. **Pendant lights:** Luray Collection, World Imports; worldimportsdesigns.com. **Tile,** Distant Thunder Quartzite (floor) and Silver Screen Collection (shower and backsplash); dalltile.com.

Low-Cost Custom Details From Design Pros' Own Homes *(pp. 70–75)* **Drawer knobs:** Scott Lee, SR Architects, San Francisco, CA; 415 673 8390; sb-architects.com. Erin Martin, Erin Martin Design, St. Helens, CA; 707-963-4141; erinmartindesign.com. **Cabinet and hood supports,** Robert Kelly, Kelly and Abramsen Architecture, Piedmont, CA; 510-836-0719; kellyabramsen.com. **Wainscoting:** Erica Broberg Smith, East Hampton, NY; 631-329-9928; ericabrobergarchitect.com. **Wall covering:** Joseph Kennard, Boston, MA; 617 292 8985; jkennard.com. **Island top:** Rick and Liz O'Leary, Two Tall Trees Architectural Design, Groton Falls, NY; 914-689-0014. **Custom-painted floor:** Amy Dutton, Juniper River Home Design, Portsmouth, NH; 207 337 2020; juniperriver.com. **Sink support:** Thaddeus Siemasko, Siemasko + Verbridge, Beverly, MA; 978-927-3745; svdesign.com. **Faux window:** Michael Gray, Carpenter & MacNeille, Essex, MA; 978-768-7900; carpentermacneille.com. **Dining table:** Red Carrett, SOM, Washington, DC; 202 367 2600; som.com.

Ask This Old House *(pp. 89–97)* Question of the Month. *Thanks to* Craig Tolmie, Tide Mill Restoration, Fairfield, CT; 203-382-4556. **Cabinets:** Turkey Hill Purestyle in Fortune Cookie by Martha Stewart Living, The Home Depot; homedepot.com

Save This Old House *(p. 106)* *Thanks to* Paul Emerson, Waldo Peirce Reading Room, Frankfort, ME; wpnlib.maine.us. Earle G. Shettleworth Jr., Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta, ME; state.me.us/mhpc. ●

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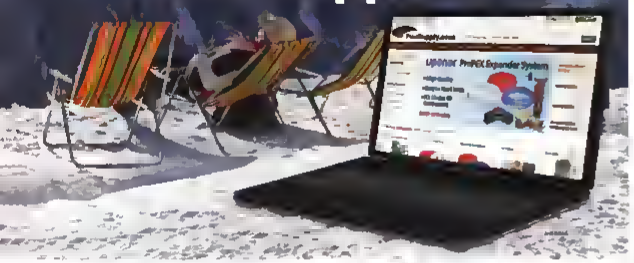

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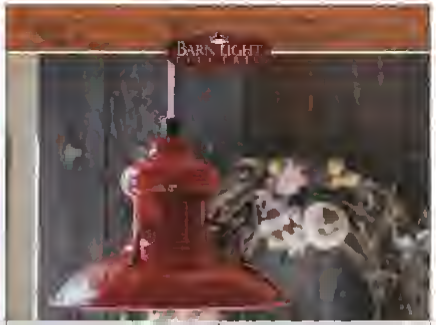

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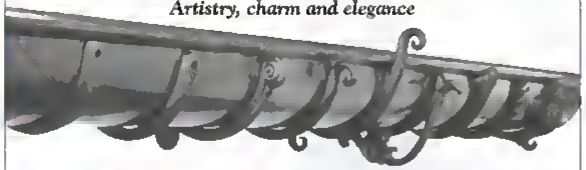

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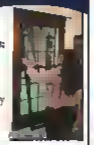

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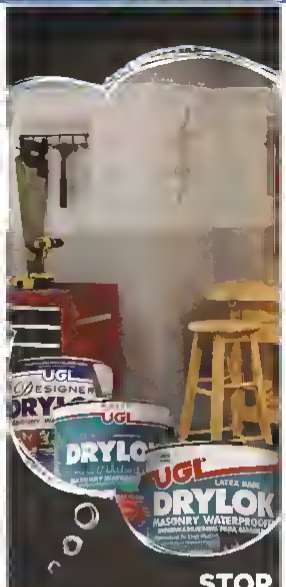

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Limit 1 Only available with qualifying minimum purchase (exclusive gift value). Coupon good 10 after stores, is prevented by by phone, Cannot be used with other discount, previous in prior purchase. Other good while supplies last. Shipping & Handling charges may apply. If not picked up in-store, Original coupon must be presented. Non-transferable. Valid through 4/14/13. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

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Limit 1 Only available with qualifying minimum purchase (exclusive gift valid). Coupon good 10 other stores, is prevented by by phone. Cannot be used with other discount, previous in prior purchase. Other good while supplies last. Shipping & Handling charges may apply. If not picked up in-store, Original coupon must be presented. Non-transferable. Valid through 4/14/13. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON!

MECHANIC'S GLOVES

LARGE LOT NO 93640/60447

X-LARGE LOT NO 93641/60448

YOUR CHOICE! $3.49

SAVE 56%

REG PRICE $7.99

SUPER COUPON!

CENTECH 100 FT. FISH TAPE

LOT NO 3897

SAVE 40% $11.99

REG PRICE $19.99

SUPER COUPON!

7 FT. 4" x 9 FT. 5" ALL PURPOSE WEATHER RESISTANT TARP

LOT NO 877/61377/ 69245/69109

Item 877 shown

SAVE 60% $2.79

REG PRICE $6.99

SUPER COUPON!

FLUORESCENT WORK LIGHT

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

LOT NO 92079

SAVE 33% $9.99

REG PRICE $14.99

SUPER COUPON!

PITTSBURGH 32 PIECE SCREWDRIVER SET

LOT NO 69764

SAVE 50% $4.99

REG PRICE $9.99

SUPER COUPON!

4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER drillmaster

LOT NO 95578/ 90625/69045

Item 90578 shown

SAVE 50% $9.99

REG PRICE $19.99

SUPER COUPON!

PITTSBURGH 3 TON HEAVY DUTY JACK STANDS

LOT NO 38946/63597

Item 58846 shown

SAVE 54% $15.99

REG PRICE $34.99

SUPER COUPON!

PITTSBURGH 12" COMBINATION SQUARE SET

LOT NO 92471

SAVE 50% $4.99

REG PRICE $9.99

SUPER COUPON!

45 WATT SOLAR PANEL KIT

Item 58751 shown

SAVE $90 $139.99

REG PRICE $229.99

LOT NO 58751/60695

SUPER COUPON!

AUTO-DARKENING WELDING HELMET WITH BLUE FLAME DESIGN

LOT NO 91214

SAVE 50% $39.99

REG PRICE $79.99

SUPER COUPON!

CENTRALPNEUMATIC 2.5 HP, 21 GALLON, 125 PSI VERTICAL AIR COMPRESSOR

LOT NO 67847/69091

Item 67847 shown

SAVE $70 $149.99

REG PRICE $219.99

SUPER COUPON!

WELDING 90 AMP FLUX WIRE WELDER

NO GAS REQUIRED!

LOT NO 69887

SAVE $60 $89.99

REG PRICE $149.99

SUPER COUPON!

U.S. GENERAL FIVE DRAWER TOOL CART

LOT NO 95272/93367

700 LB. CAPACITY

SAVE $130 $169.99

REG PRICE $299.99

SUPER COUPON!

PITTSBURGH RAPID PUMP® 3 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK

LOT NO 69045/69227

SAVE $70

$69.99 REG. PRICE $139.99

74 LBS.

SUPER COUPON!

CENTRALPNEUMATIC 18 GAUGE 2-IN-1 NAILER/STAPLER

LOT NO 68618

SAVE 55%

WE CARRY A FULL LINE OF FASTENERS

$15.99 REG PRICE $35.99

SUPER COUPON!

4 PIECE WOOD CHISEL SET

1" 3/4" 1/2" 1/4"

Item 40406 shown

LOT NO 42429/69471

SAVE 43% $4.49

REG PRICE $7.99

SUPER COUPON!

29 PIECE TITANIUM NITRIDE COATED DRILL BIT SET drillmaster

LOT NO 5899

SAVE 60% $9.99

REG PRICE $24.99

SUPER COUPON!

36 LED SOLAR SECURITY LIGHT Hunter Mfr. Security

Item 99055 shown

LOT NO 99055/69644/ 60690/60498

SAVE 28% $17.99

REG PRICE $24.99

Includes 4.2 volt, 800mAHR volt NiMH rechargeable battery pack.

SUPER COUPON!

MOVER'S DOLLY Haul-Master

LOT NO 93888/60497

Item 93888 shown

SAVE 46% $7.99

1000 LB. CAPACITY

REG. PRICE $14.99

SUPER COUPON!

CENTECH 8 FUNCTION DIGITAL CLAMP METER

LOT NO 96308

SAVE 50% $9.99

REG PRICE $19.99

SUPER COUPON!

11,000 OPM drillmaster ORBITAL PALM SANDER

LOT NO 40070

SAVE 55% $8.99

REG PRICE $19.99

SUPER COUPON!

4 PIECE 1" x 15 FT. RATCHETING TIE DOWN SET

LOT NO 90804/66406

Item 90804 shown

SAVE 52% $7.99

REG PRICE $16.99

SUPER COUPON!

ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW SHARPENER CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

LOT NO 68221/93213

Item 68221 shown

4-1/4" DIAMOND WHEEL INCLUDED

SAVE 40% $29.99

REG. PRICE $49.99

SUPER COUPON!

18 VOLT CORDLESS 1/2" DRILL/DRIVER WITH KEYLESS CHUCK CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

LOT NO 58850

SAVE 33% $39.99

available 18V NEX battery and charger

REG PRICE $59.99

SUPER COUPON!

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS 10" SLIDING COMPOUND MITER SAW

LOT NO 68158/69681

Item 68189 shown

SAVE $65 $84.99

REG. PRICE $149.99

SUPER COUPON!

500 LB. CAPACITY STEEL CARGO CARRIER Haul-Master

LOT NO 69063/69063

Item 90988 shown

SAVE $50 $49.99

REG PRICE $99.99

SUPER COUPON!

SUPER QUIET!

3200 RATED WATTS/ 4000 MAX. WATTS PORTABLE GENERATOR PREDATOR GENERATORS (212 CC)

70 dB Noise Level

LOT NO 68520/ 67966/69078/69729

LOT NO 69527/ 69075/69728 CALIFORNIA ONLY

Item 68520 shown

SAVE $160 $289.99

REG PRICE $449.99

SUPER COUPON!

60" WORKBENCH WITH FOUR DRAWERS WINDSOR DESIGN

LOT NO 93454/69054

Item 93454 shown

SAVE $90 $139.99

REG PRICE $229.99

SUPER COUPON!

6.5 HP OHV HORIZONTAL SHAFT GAS ENGINE (212 CC) PREDATOR ENGINES

LOT NO 98121/ 98736/69363

LOT NO. 98121/69727 CALIFORNIA ONLY

Item 68420 shown

SAVE $80 $99.99

REG PRICE $179.99

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savethisoldhouse

Price: $65 000
Location: Frankfort, Maine
Contact: Tara Roy, Realty of Maine, 800 639 2162

The history: This charming 4 305-square-foot house was built by local merchant and shipwright Franklin Treat in 1864, back when granite lumber, and shipbuilding were this small town's big industries. Ten years later, Treat sold the home to Louisa T. Peirce, whose late husband was granite baron George Albert Peirce and whose great-nephew Waldo Peirce became a well-known painter. After the Peirces, the house passed through many hands. Though it has been vacant since the 1980s, Treat's initials remain etched in the front doors' glass panels.

Why save it? The three-bedroom, one-bath home reflects a unique mix of Second Empire and Italianate details, including the original mansard roof, arched windows and porch embellishments, and elaborate plaster moldings. It sits on an acre of land in the center of a quiet town of about 1 300 residents between Bangor and Belfast.

What it needs: The structure is sound, but roof repairs and system updates are needed. The kitchen is gutted, though previous owners poured a foundation for a new one. There are no zoning restrictions, so a new owner could use the house as a shop, a studio, or an office with living quarters—or simply restore it as a family home for another century and a half of small-town living.

—NATALIA KNOCHOWSKI

SHARE YOUR REMODEL
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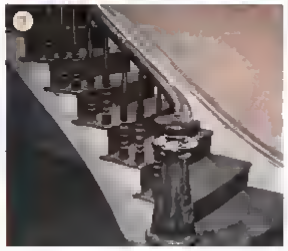
A small-town gem with original details!



1 The 1864 house's exterior has original features of both Second Empire (the mansard roof) and Italianate (the arched windows) styles. *2* Ornate archways and double doors with carved wood and etched glass details grace the front entry. *3* Inside, much of the impressive front staircase remains, though some loose balusters have been stored and await reinstallation. *4* Elaborate plaster crown moldings in the public rooms of the house are still in good shape.

Got a house? If you know of an old house that should be saved and is for sale, write to savethisoldhouse@timeinc.com or This Old House, 135 West 50th Street, New York, NY 10020.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TARA ROY/REALTY OF MAINE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE DIRECTORY, PAGE 98

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